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POPULAR ADVENTURE TALES

BY

R. M. BALLANTYNE



The Difficulty of Snow-shoe Walking.

Popular Adventure Tales

COMPRISING

THE YOUNG FUR TRADERS

A TALE OF THE NORTH

THE CORAL ISLAND

A TALE OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN

MARTIN RATTLER

A TALE OF THE FORESTS OF BRAZIL

By

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Popular Adventure Tales.

THE YOUNG FUR-TRADERS.

CHAPTER I.

Plunges the reader into the middle of an Arctic winter ; conveys him into the heart of the wildernesses of North America ; and introduces him to some of the principal personages of our tale.

SNOWFLAKES and sunbeams, heat and cold, winter and summer, alternated with their wonted regularity for fifteen years in the wild regions of the Far North. During this space of time the hero of our tale sprouted from babyhood to boyhood, passed through the usual amount of accidents, ailments, and vicissitudes incidental to those periods of life, and finally entered upon that ambiguous condition that precedes early manhood.

It was a clear, cold winter's day. The sunbeams of summer were long past, and snowflakes had fallen thickly on the banks of Red River. Charley sat on a lump of blue ice, his head drooping and his eyes bent on the snow at his feet with an expression of deep disconsolation.

Kate reclined at Charley's side, looking wistfully up in his expressive face, as if to read the thoughts that were chasing each other through his mind, like the ever-varying clouds that floated in the winter sky above. It was quite evident to the most careless observer that, whatever might be the usual temperaments of the boy and girl their present state of mind was not joyous, but, on the contrary, very sad.

"It won't do, sister Kate," said Charley. "I've tried him over and over again—I've implored, begged, and entreated him to let me go ; but he won't, and I'm determined to run away, so there's an end of it !"

As Charley gave utterance to this unalterable resolution, he rose from the bit of blue ice, and taking Kate by the hand, led her over the frozen river, climbed up the bank on the opposite side—an operation of some difficulty, owing to the snow, which had been drifted so deeply during a late storm that the usual track was almost obliterated—and turning into a path that lost itself among the willows, they speedily disappeared.

As it is possible our reader may desire to know who Charley and Kate are, and the part of the world in which they dwell, we will interrupt the thread of our narrative to explain.

In the very centre of the great continent of North America, far removed from the abodes of civilized men, and about twenty miles to the South of Lake Winnipeg, exists a colony composed of Indians, Scotsmen, and French-Canadians, which is known by the name of Red River Settlement. Red River differs from most colonies in more respects than one—the chief differences being, that whereas other colonies cluster on the sea-coast, this one lies many hundreds of miles in the interior of the country, and is surrounded by a wilderness; and while other colonies, acting on the Golden Rule, export their produce in return for goods imported, this of Red River imports a large quantity and exports nothing, or next to nothing. Not but that it *might* export, if it only had an outlet or a market; but being eight hundred miles removed from the sea, and five hundred miles from the nearest market, with a series of rivers, lakes, rapids, and cataracts separating from the one, and a wide sweep of treeless prairie dividing from the other, the settlers have long since come to the conclusion that they were born to consume their own produce, and so regulate the extent of their farming operations by the strength of their appetites. Of course, there are many of the necessaries, or at least the luxuries, of life which the colonists cannot grow—such as tea, coffee, sugar, coats, trousers, and shirts—and which, consequently, they procure from England, by means of the Hudson's Bay Fur Company's ships, which sail once a year from Gravesend, laden with supplies for the trade carried on with the Indians. And the bales containing these articles are conveyed in boats up the rivers, carried past the waterfalls and rapids overland on the shoulders of stalwart voyageurs, and finally landed at Red River, after a rough trip of many week's duration. The colony was founded in 1811, by the Earl of Selkirk, previously to which it had been a trading-post of the Fur Company. At the time of which we write, it contained about five thousand souls, and extended upwards of fifty miles along the Red and Assiniboine rivers, which streams supplied the settlers with a variety of excellent fish. The banks were clothed with fine trees; and immediately behind the settlement lay the great prairies, which extend in undulating waves—almost entirely devoid of shrub or tree—to the base of the Rocky Mountains.

Although far removed from the civilized world, and containing within its precincts much that is savage and very little that is refined, Red River is quite a populous paradise as compared with the desolate, solitary establishments of the Hudson's Bay Fur Company. These lonely dwellings of the trader are scattered far and wide over the whole continent—north, south, east, and west. Their population generally amounts to eight or ten men—seldom to thirty. They are planted in the thick of an uninhabited desert—their next neighbours being from two to five hundred miles off; their occasional visitors, bands of wandering Indians; and the sole object of their existence being to trade the furry hides of foxes, martens, beavers, badgers, bears, buffaloes, and wolves. It will not, then, be deemed a matter of wonder that the gentlemen who have charge of these establishments, and who, perchance, may have spent ten or twenty years in them should look upon the colony of Red River as a species of

Elysium—a sort of haven of rest, in which they may lay their weary heads, and spend the remainder of their days in peaceful felicity, free from the cares of a residence among wild beasts and wild men. Many of the retiring traders prefer casting their lot in Canada; but not a few of them *smoke* out the remainder of their existence in this colony—especially those who, having left home as boys fifty or sixty years before, cannot reasonably expect to find the friends of their childhood where they left them, and cannot hope to remodel tastes and habits long nurtured in the backwoods so as to relish the manners and customs of civilized society.

Such an one was old Frank Kennedy, who, sixty years before the date of our story, ran away from school in Scotland; got a severe thrashing from his father for so doing; and having no mother in whose sympathizing bosom he could weep out his sorrow, ran away from home, went to sea, ran away from his ship while she lay at anchor in the harbour of New York, and after leading a wandering unsettled life for several years, during which he had been alternately a clerk, a day-labourer, a store keeper, and a village schoolmaster, he wound up by entering the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, in which he obtained an insight into savage life, a comfortable fortune, besides a half-breed wife and a large family.

Being a man of great energy and courage, and moreover possessed of a large, powerful frame, he was sent to one of the most distant posts on the Mackenzie River, as being admirably suited for the display of his powers both mental and physical. Here the small-pox broke out among the natives, and besides carrying off hundreds of these poor creatures, robbed Mr. Kennedy of all his children save two, Charles and Kate, whom we have already introduced to the reader.

About the same time the council which is annually held at Red River in spring for the purpose of arranging the affairs of the country for the ensuing year thought proper to appoint Mr. Kennedy to a still more outlandish part of the country—as near, in fact, to the North Pole as it was possible for mortal man to live—and sent him an order to proceed to his destination without loss of time. On receiving this communication Mr. Kennedy upset his chair, stamped his foot, ground his teeth, and vowed, in the hearing of his wife and children, that sooner than obey the mandate he would see the governors and council of Rupert's Land hanged, quartered, and boiled down into tallow! Ebullitions of this kind were peculiar to Frank Kennedy, and meant *nothing*. They were simply the safety-valves to his superabundant ire, and, like safety-valves in general, made much noise but did no damage. It was well, however, on such occasions to keep out of the old fur-trader's way; for he had an irresistible propensity to hit out at whatever stood before him, especially if the object stood on a level with his own eyes and wore whiskers. On second thoughts, however, he sat down before his writing-table, took a sheet of blue ruled foolscap paper, seized a quill which he had mended six months previously, at a time when he happened to be in high good-humour, and wrote as follows:—

To the Governor and Council of Rupert's Land,
Red River Settlement.

FORT PASKISEGUN,
June 15, 18—.

GENTLEMEN,—I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your favour of 26th April last, appointing me to the charge of Peel's River,

and directing me to strike out new channels of trade in that quarter. In reply, I have to state that I shall have the honour to fulfil your instructions by taking my departure in a light canoe as soon as possible. At the same time I beg humbly to submit that the state of my health is such as to render it expedient for me to retire from the service, and I herewith beg to hand in my resignation. I shall hope to be relived early next spring.—I have the honour to be, gentlemen, your most obedient humble servant,

F. KENNEDY.

"There!" exclaimed the old gentleman, in a tone that would lead one to suppose he had signed the death-warrant, and so had irrevocably fixed the certain destruction, of the entire council—"there!" said he, rising from his chair, and sticking the quill into the ink-bottle with a *dab* that split it up to the feather, and so rendered it *hors de combat* for all time coming.

To this letter the council gave a short reply, accepting his resignation, and appointing a successor. On the following spring old Mr. Kennedy embarked his wife and children in a bark canoe, and in process of time landed them safely in Red River Settlement. Here he purchased a house with six acres of land, in which he planted a variety of useful vegetables, and built a summer-house after the fashion of a conservatory, where he was wont to solace himself for hours together with a pipe, or rather with dozens of pipes, of Canada twist tobacco.

After this he put his two children to school. The settlement was at this time fortunate in having a most excellent academy, which was conducted by a very estimable man. Charles and Kate Kennedy, being obedient and clever, made rapid progress under his judicious management, and the only fault that he had to find with the young people was, that Kate was a little too quiet and fond of books, while Charley was a little too riotous and fond of fun.

When Charles arrived at the age of fifteen and Kate attained to fourteen years, old Mr. Kennedy went into his conservatory, locked the door, sat down on an easy chair, filled a long clay pipe with his beloved tobacco, smoked vigorously for ten minutes, and fell fast asleep. In this condition he remained until the pipe fell from his lips and broke in fragments on the floor. He then rose, filled another pipe, and sat down to meditate on the subject that had brought him to his smoking apartment. "There's my wife," said he, looking at the bowl of his pipe, as if he were addressing himself to it, "she's getting too old to be looking after everything herself (*puff*), and Kate's getting too old to be humbugging any longer with books; besides, she ought to be at home learning to keep house, and help her mother, and cut the baccy (*puff*), and that young scamp Charley should be entering the service (*puff*). He's clever enough now to trade beaver and bears from the red-skins; besides, he's (*puff*) a young rascal, and I'll be bound does nothing but lead the other boys into (*puff*) mischief, although, to be sure, the master *does* say he's the cleverest fellow in the school; but he must be reined up a bit now. I'll clap on a double curb and martingale. I'll get him a situation in the counting-room at the fort (*puff*), where he'll have his nose held tight to the grindstone. Yes, I'll fix both their flints to-morrow;" and old Mr. Kennedy gave vent to another puff so thick and long that it seemed as if all the previous puffs had concealed themselves

up to this moment within his capacious chest, and rushed out at last in one thick and long continued stream.

By 'fixing their flints' Mr. Kennedy meant to express the fact that he intended to place his children in an entirely new sphere of action, and with a view to this he ordered out his horse and cariole* on the following morning, went up to the school, which was about ten miles distant from his abode, and brought his children home with him the same evening. Kate was now formally installed as housekeeper and tobacco-cutter; while Charley was told that his future destiny was to wield the quill in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, and that he might take a week to think over it. Quiet, warm-hearted, affectionate Kate was overjoyed at the thought of being a help and comfort to her old father and mother; but reckless, joyous, good-humoured, hare-brained Charley was cast into the depths of despair at the idea of spending the livelong day, and day after day, for years it might be, on the top of a long-legged stool. In fact, poor Charley said that he 'would rather become a buffalo than do it.' Now this was very wrong of Charley, for, of course, he didn't *mean* it. Indeed, it is too much a habit among little boys, ay, and among grown-up people too, to say what they don't mean, as no doubt you are aware, dear reader, if you possess half the self-knowledge we give you credit for; and we cannot too strongly remonstrate with ourself and others against the practice—leading, as it does, to all sorts of absurd exaggerations, such as gravely asserting that we are 'broiling hot' when we are simply 'rather warm,' or more than 'half dead' with fatigue when we are merely 'very tired.' However, Charlie *said* that he would rather be 'a buffalo than do it,' and so we feel bound in honour to record the fact.

Charley and Kate were warmly attached to each other. Moreover, they had been, ever since they could walk, in the habit of mingling their little joys and sorrows in each other's bosoms; and although, as years flew past, they gradually ceased to sob in each other's arms at every little mishap, they did not cease to interchange their inmost thoughts, and to mingle their tears when occasion called them forth. They knew the power, the inexpressible sweetness, of sympathy. They understood experimentally the comfort and joy that flow from obedience to that blessed commandment to 'rejoice with those that do rejoice, and weep with those that weep.' It was natural, therefore, that on Mr. Kennedy announcing his decrees, Charley and Kate should hasten to some retired spot where they could commune in solitude; the effect of which communing was to reduce them to a somewhat calmer and rather happy state of mind. Charley's sorrow was blunted by sympathy with Kate's joy, and Kate's joy was subdued by sympathy with Charley's sorrow; so that, after the first effervescing burst, they settled down into a calm and comfortable state of flatness, with *very* red eyes and exceedingly pensive minds. We must, however, do Charley the justice to say that the red eyes applied only to Kate; for although a tear or two could without much coaxing be induced to hop over his sunburned cheek, he had got beyond that period of life when boys are addicted to (we must give the word, though not pretty, because it is eminently expressive) *blubbering*.

A week later found Charley and his sister seated on the lump of

* A sort of sleigh.

blue ice where they were first introduced to the reader, and where Charley announced his unalterable resolve to run away, following it up with the statement that *that* was 'the end of it.' He was quite mistaken, however, for that was by no means the end of it. In fact it was only the beginning of it as we shall see hereafter.

CHAPTER II.

The old fur-trader endeavours to 'fix' his son's 'flint,' and finds the thing more difficult to do than he expected.

Near the centre of the colony of Red River, the stream from which the settlement derives its name is joined by another, called the Assiniboine. About five or six hundred yards from the point where this union takes place, and on the banks of the latter stream, stands the Hudson's Bay Company's trading-post, Fort Garry. It is a massive square building of stone. Four high and thick walls enclose a space of ground on which are built six or eight wooden houses, some of which are used as dwellings for the servants of the Hudson's Bay Company, and others as stores, wherein are contained the furs, the provisions which are sent annually to various parts of the country and the goods (such as cloth, guns, powder and shot, blankets, twine, axes, knives, etc., etc.) with which the fur-trade is carried on. Although Red River is a peaceful colony, and not at all likely to be assaulted by the poor Indians, it was, nevertheless, deemed prudent by the traders to make some show of power; and so at the corners of the fort four round bastions of a very imposing appearance were built, from the embrasures of which several large black-muzzled guns protruded. No one ever conceived the idea of firing these engines of war; and, indeed, it is highly probable that such an attempt would have been attended with consequences much more dreadful to those *behind* than to those who might chance to be in front of the guns. Nevertheless they were imposing, and harmonized well with the flag-staff, which was the only other military symptom about the place. This latter was used on particular occasions, such as the arrival or departure of a brigade of boats, for the purpose of displaying the folds of a red flag on which were the letters H. B. C.

The fort stood, as we have said, on the banks of the Assiniboine River, on the opposite side of which the land was somewhat wooded though not heavily, with oak, maple, poplar, aspens, and willows; while at the back of the fort the great prairie rolled out like a green sea to the horizon, and far beyond that again to the base of the Rocky Mountains. The plains at this time, however, were a sheet of unbroken snow, and the river a mass of solid ice.

It was noon on the day following that on which our friend Charley had threatened rebellion, when a tall elderly man might have been seen standing at the back gate of Fort Garry, gazing wistfully out into the prairie in the direction of the lower part of the settlement. He was watching a small speck which moved rapidly over the snow in the direction of the fort.

"It's very like our friend Frank Kennedy," said he to himself (at least we presume so, for there was no one else within earshot to whom he could have said it, except the door-post, which every one knows is

proverbially a deaf subject). "No man in the settlement drives so furiously. I shouldn't wonder if he ran against the corner of the new fence now. Ha ! just so—there he goes !"

And truly the reckless driver did 'go' just at that moment. He came up to the corner of the new fence, where the road took a rather abrupt turn, in a style that insured a capsizing. In another second the spirited horse turned sharp round, the sleigh turned sharp over, and the occupant was pitched out at full length, while a black object that might have been mistaken for his hat, rose from his side like a rocket, and, flying over him, landed on the snow several yards beyond. A faint shout was heard to float on the breeze as this catastrophe occurred, and the driver was seen to jump up and readjust himself in the cariole ; while the other black object proved itself not to be a hat, by getting hastily up on a pair of legs, and scrambling back to the seat from which it had been so unceremoniously ejected.

In a few minutes more the cheerful tinkling of the merry sleigh-bells was heard, and Frank Kennedy, accompanied by his hopeful son Charles, dashed up to the gate, and pulled up with a jerk.

"Ha ! Grant, my fine fellow, how are you ?" exclaimed Mr. Kennedy, senior, as he disengaged himself from the heavy folds of the buffalo robe and shook the snow from his greatcoat. "Why on earth man, don't you put up a sign-post and a board to warn travellers that you've been running out new fences and changing the road, eh ?"

"Why, my good friend," said Mr. Grant, smiling, "the fence and the road are of themselves pretty conclusive proof to most men that the road is changed ; and, besides, we don't often have people driving round corners at full gallop ; but—"

"Hollo ! Charley, you rascal," interrupted Mr. Kennedy—"here, take the mare to the stable, and don't drive her too fast. Mind, now, no going off upon the wrong road for the sake of a drive, you understand."

"All right, father," exclaimed the boy, while a bright smile lit up his features and displayed two rows of white teeth : "I'll be particularly careful," and he sprang into the light vehicle, seized the reins, and with a sharp crack of the whip dashed down the road at a hard gallop.

"He's a fine fellow that son of yours," said Mr. Grant, "and will make a first-rate fur-trader."

"Fur-trader !" exclaimed Mr. Kennedy. "Just look at him ! I'll be shot if he isn't thrashing the mare as if she were made of leather." The old man's ire was rising rapidly as he heard the whip crack every now and then, and saw the mare bound madly over the snow. "And see !" he continued, "I declare he *has* taken the wrong turn after all."

"True," said Mr. Grant : "he'll never reach the stable by that road ; he's much more likely to visit the White-horse Plains. But come, friend, it's of no use fretting. Charley will soon tire of his ride ; so come with me to my room and have a pipe before dinner."

Old Mr. Kennedy gave a short groan of despair, shook his fist at the form of his retreating son, and accompanied his friend to the house.

It must not be supposed that Frank Kennedy was very deeply offended with his son, although he did shower on him a considerable amount of abuse. On the contrary, he loved him very much. But it

was the old man's nature to give way to little bursts of passion on almost every occasion in which his feelings were at all excited. These bursts, however, were like the little puffs that ripple the surface of the sea on a calm summer's day. They were over in a second, and left his good-humoured, rough, candid countenance in unruffled serenity. Charley knew this well, and loved his father tenderly, so that his conscience frequently smote him for raising his anger so often ; and he over and over again promised his sister Kate to do his best to refrain from doing anything that was likely to annoy the old man in future. But, alas ! Charley's resolves, like those of many other boys, were soon forgotten, and his father's equanimity was upset generally two or three times a-day ; but after the gust was over, the fur-trader would kiss his son, call him a ' rascal,' and send him off to fill and fetch his pipe.

Mr. Grant, who was in charge of Fort Garry, led the way to his smoking apartment, where the two were soon seated in front of a roaring log-fire, emulating each other in the manufacture of smoke.

"Well, Kennedy," said Mr. Grant, throwing himself back in his chair, elevating his chin, and emitting a long thin stream of white vapour from his lips, through which he gazed at his friend complacently—"well Kennedy, to what fortunate chance am I indebted for this visit? It is not often that we have the pleasure of seeing you here."

Mr. Kennedy created two large volumes of smoke, which, by means of a vigorous puff, he sent rolling over towards his friend, and said, "Charley."

"And what of Charley?" said Mr. Grant, with a smile, for he was well aware of the boy's propensity to fun, and of the father's desire to curb it.

"The fact is," replied Kennedy, "that Charley must be broke. He's the wildest colt I ever had to tame, but I'll do it—I will—that's a fact."

If Charley's subjugation had depended on the rapidity with which the little white clouds proceeded from his sire's mouth, there is no doubt that it would have been a 'fact' in a very short time, for they rushed from him with the violence of a high wind. Long habit had made the old trader and his pipe not only inseparable companions, but part and parcel of each other—so intimately connected that a change in the one was sure to produce a sympathetic change in the other. In the present instance, the little clouds rapidly increased in size and number as the old gentleman thought on the obstinacy of his 'colt.'

"Yes," he continued, after a moment's silence, "I've made up my mind to tame him, and I want you, Mr. Grant, to help me."

Mr. Grant looked as if he would rather not undertake to lend his aid in a work that was evidently difficult ; but being a good-natured man, he said, "And how, friend, can I assist in the operation?"

"Well you see, Charley's a good fellow at bottom, and a clever fellow too—at least so says the schoolmaster ; though I must confess, that so far as my experience goes, he's only clever at finding out excuses for not doing what I want him to. But still I'm told he's clever and can use his pen well ; and I know for certain that he can use his tongue well. So I want to get him into the service, and have him placed in a situation where he shall have to stick to his desk all day.

In fact, I want to have him broken in to work ; for you've no notion, sir, how that boy talks about bears and buffaloes and badgers, and life in the woods among the Indians. I do believe," continued the old gentleman, waxing warm, "that he would willingly go into the woods to-morrow, if I would let him, and never show his nose in the settlement again. He's quite incorrigible. But I'll tame him yet—I will!"

Mr. Kennedy followed this up with an indignant grunt, and a puff of smoke, so thick, and propelled with such vigour, that it rolled and curled in fantastic evolutions towards the ceiling, as if it were unable to control itself with delight at the absolute certainty of Charley being tamed at last.

Mr. Grant, however, shook his head, and remained for five minutes in profound silence, during which time the two friends puffed in concert, until they began to grow quite indistinct and ghost-like in the thick atmosphere.

At last he broke silence.

"My opinion is that you're wrong, Mr. Kennedy. No doubt you know the disposition of your son better than I do ; but even judging of it from what you have said, I'm quite sure that a sedentary life will ruin him."

"Ruin him! Humbug!" said Kennedy, who never failed to express his opinion at the shortest notice and in the plainest language—a fact so well known by his friends that they had got into the habit of taking no notice of it. "Humbug!" he repeated, "perfect humbug! You don't mean to tell me that the way to break him in is to let him run loose and wild whenever and wherever he pleases?"

"By no means. But you may rest assured that tying him down won't do it."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Kennedy testily ; "don't tell me. Have I not broken in young colts by the score ? and don't I know that the way to fix their flints is to clap on a good strong curb?"

"If you had travelled farther south, friend," replied Mr. Grant, "you would have seen the Spaniards of Mexico break in their wild horses in a very different way ; for after catching one with a lasso, a fellow gets on his back, and gives it the rein and the whip—ay, and the spur too ; and before that race is over, there is no need for a curb."

"What!" exclaimed Kennedy, "and do you mean to argue from that, that I should let Charley run—and *help* him too? Send him off to the woods with gun and blanket, canoe and tent, all complete?" The old gentleman puffed a furious puff, and broke into a loud sarcastic laugh.

"No, no," interrupted Mr. Grant ; "I don't exactly mean that, but I think that you might give him his way for a year or so. He's a fine, active generous fellow ; and after the novelty wore off, he would be in a much better frame of mind to listen to your proposals. Besides" (and Mr. Grant smiled expressively), "Charley is somewhat like his father. He has got a will of his own ; and if you do not give him his way, I very much fear that he'll--"

"What?" inquired Mr. Kennedy abruptly.

"Take it," said Mr. Grant.

The puff that burst from Mr. Kennedy's lips on hearing this would have done credit to a thirty-six pounder.

"Take it!" said he; "he'd *better* not."

The latter part of this speech was not in itself of a nature calculated to convey much; but the tone of the old trader's voice, the contraction of his eyebrows, and above all the overwhelming flow of cloudlets that followed, imparted to it a significance that induced the belief that Charley's taking his own way would be productive of more terrific consequences than it was in the power of the most highly imaginative man to conceive.

"There's his sister Kate, now," continued the old gentleman; "she's as gentle and as biddable as a lamb. I've only to say a word, and she's off like a shot to do my bidding; and she does it with such a sweet smile too." There was a touch of pathos in the old trader's voice as he said this. He was a man of strong feeling, and as impulsive in his tenderness as in his wrath. "But that rascal Charley," he continued, "is quite different. 'He's obstinate as a mule. To be sure, he has a good temper; and I must say for him he never goes into the sulks, which is a comfort, for of all things in the world sulking is the most childish and contemptible. He *generally* does what I bid him, too. But he's *always* getting into scrapes of one kind or other. And during the last week, notwithstanding all I can say to him, he won't admit that the best thing for him is to get a place in your counting room, with the prospect of rapid promotion in the service. Very odd. I can't understand it at all;" and Mr. Kennedy heaved a deep sigh.

"Did you ever explain to him the prospects that he would have in the situation you propose for him?" inquired Mr. Grant.

"Can't say I ever did."

"Did you ever point out the probable end of a life spent in the woods?"

"No."

"Nor suggest to him that the appointment to the office here would only be temporary, and to see how he got on in it?"

"Certainly not."

"Then, my dear sir, I'm not surprised that Charley rebels. You have left him to suppose that, once placed at the desk here, he is a prisoner for life. But see, there he is," said Mr. Grant, pointing as he spoke towards the subject of their conversation, who was passing the window at the moment; "let me call him, and I feel certain that he will listen to reason in a few minutes."

"Humph!" ejaculated Mr. Kennedy, "you may try"

In another minute Charley had been summoned, and was seated, cap in hand, near the door.

"Charley, my boy," began Mr. Grant, standing with his back to the fire, his feet pretty wide apart, and his coat-tails under his arms — "Charley, my boy, your father has just been speaking of you. He is very anxious that you should enter the service of the Hudson's Bay Company; and as you are a clever boy and a good penman, we think that you would be likely to get on if placed for a year or so in our office here. I need scarcely point out to you, my boy, that in such a position you would be sure to obtain more rapid promotion than if you were placed in one of the distant outposts, where you would have very little to do, and perhaps little to eat, and no one to converse with except one or two men. Of course, we would merely place you here on trial, to see how you suited us; and if you prove steady and

diligent, there is no saying how fast you might get on. Why, you might even come to fill *my* place in course of time. Come now, Charley, what think you of it?"

Charley's eyes had been cast on the ground while Mr. Grant was speaking. He now raised them, looked at his father, then at his interrogator, and said,—

"It is very kind of you both to be so anxious about my prospects. I thank you, indeed, very much; but I—a—"

"Don't like the desk?" said his father, in an angry tone. "Is that it, eh?"

Charley made no reply, but cast down his eyes again and smiled (Charley had a sweet smile, a peculiarly sweet, candid smile), as if he meant to say that his father had hit the nail quite on the top of the head that time, and no mistake.

"But consider," resumed Mr. Grant, "although you might probably be pleased with an outpost life at first, you would be sure to grow weary of it after the novelty wore off, and then you would wish with all your heart to be back here again. Believe me, child, a trader's life is a very hard and not often a very satisfactory one—"

"Ay," broke in the father, desirous, if possible, to help the argument, "and you'll find it a desperately wild, unsettled, roving sort of life, too, let me tell you! full of dangers both from wild beasts and wild men—"

"Hush!" interrupted Mr. Grant, observing that the boy's eye kindled when his father spoke of a wild, roving life, and wild beasts. —"Your father does not mean that life at an outpost is wild and *interesting* or *exciting*. He merely means that—a—it—"

Mr. Grant could not very well explain what it was that Mr. Kennedy meant if he did not mean that, so he turned to him for help.

"Exactly so," said that gentleman, taking a strong pull at the pipe for inspiration. "It's no ways interesting or exciting at all. It's slow, dull, and flat; a miserable sort of Robinson Crusoe life, with red Indians and starvation constantly staring you in the face—"

"Besides," said Mr. Grant, again interrupting the somewhat unfortunate efforts of his friend, who seemed to have a happy facility in sending a brilliant dash of romantic allusion across the dark side of his picture—"besides, you'll not have opportunity to amuse yourself, or to read, as you'll have no books, and you'll have to work hard with your hands oftentimes, like your men—"

"In fact," broke in the impatient father, resolved, apparently, to carry the point with a grand *coup*—"in fact, you'll have to *rough it*, as I did, when I went up the Mackenzie River district, where I was sent to establish a new post, and had to travel for weeks and weeks through a wild country, where none of us had ever been before; where we shot our own meat, caught our own fish, and built our own house—and were very near being murdered by the Indians; though to be sure, afterwards they became the most civil fellows in the country, and brought us plenty of skins. Ay, lad you'll repent of your obstinacy when you come to have to hunt your own dinner, as I've done many a day up the Saskatchewan, where I've had to fight with red-skins and grizzly bears and to chase the buffaloes over miles and miles of prairie on rough-going nags till my bones ached and I scarce knew whether I sat on—"

"Oh," exclaimed Charley, starting to his feet, while his eye flashed

and his chest heaved with emotion, "that's the place for me, father!—Do, please, Mr. Grant, send me there, and I'll work for you with all my might!"

Frank Kennedy was not a man to stand this unexpected mis-carriage of his eloquence with equanimity. His first action was to throw his pipe at the head of his enthusiastic boy; without worse effect, however, than smashing it to atoms on the opposite wall. He then started up and rushed towards his son, who, being near the door retreated precipitately and vanished.

"So," said Mr. Grant, not very sure whether to laugh or be angry at the result of their united efforts, "you've settled the question now at all events."

Frank Kennedy said nothing, but filled another pipe, sat doggedly down in front of the fire, and speedily enveloped himself, and his friend, and all that the room contained, in thick, impenetrable clouds of smoke.

Meanwhile his worthy son rushed off in a state of great glee. He had often heard the voyageurs of Red River dilate on the delights of roughing it in the woods, and his heart had bounded as they spoke of dangers encountered and overcome among the rapids of the Far North, or with the bears and bison-bulls of the prairie, but never till now had he heard his father corroborate their testimony by a recital of his own actual experience; and although the old gentleman's intention was undoubtedly to damp the boy's spirit, his eloquence had exactly the opposite effect—so that it was with a hop and a shout that he burst into the counting-room, with the occupants of which Charley was a special favourite.

CHAPTER III.

The counting-room.

EVERY one knows the general appearance of a counting-room. There are one or two peculiar features about such apartments that are quite unmistakable and very characteristic; and the counting-room at Fort Garry, although many hundred miles distant from other specimens of its race, and, from the peculiar circumstances of its position, not therefore likely to bear them much resemblance, possessed one or two features of similarity, in the shape of two large desks and several very tall stools, besides sundry ink-bottles, rulers, books, and sheets of blotting-paper. But there were other implements there, savouring strongly of the backwoods and savage life, which merit more particular notice.

The room itself was small, and lighted by two little windows, which opened into the court-yard. The entire apartment was made of wood. The floor was of unpainted fir boards. The walls were of the same material, painted blue from the floor upwards to about three feet, where the blue was unceremoniously stopped short by a stripe of bright red, above which the somewhat fanciful decorator had laid on a coat of pale yellow; and the ceiling, by way of variety was of a deep ochre. As the occupants of Red River office were, however, addicted to the use of tobacco and tallow candles, the

original colour of the ceiling had vanished entirely, and that of the walls had considerably changed.

There were three doors in the room (besides the door of entrance), each opening into another apartment, where the three clerks were wont to court the favour of Morpheus after the labours of the day. No carpets graced the floors of any of these rooms, and with the exception of the paint aforementioned, no ornament whatever broke the pleasing uniformity of the scene. This was compensated, however, to some extent by several scarlet sashes, bright-coloured shot-belts, and gay portions of winter costume peculiar to the country, which depended from sundry nails in the bedroom walls; and as the three doors always stood open, these objects, together with one or two fowling-pieces and canoe-paddles, formed quite a brilliant and highly suggestive background to the otherwise sombre picture. A large open fireplace stood in one corner of the room, devoid of a grate, and so constructed that large logs of wood might be piled up on end to any extent. And really the fires made in this manner, and in this individual fireplace, were exquisite beyond description. A wood-fire is a particularly cheerful thing. Those who have never seen one can form but a faint idea of its splendour; especially on a sharp winter night in the arctic regions, where the thermometer falls to forty degrees below zero, without inducing the inhabitants to suppose that the world has reached its conclusion. The billets are usually piled up on end, so that the flames rise and twine round them with a fierce intensity that causes them to crack and sputter cheerfully, sending innumerable sparks of fire into the room, and throwing out a rich glow of brilliant light that warms a man even to look at it, and renders candles quite unnecessary.

The clerks who inhabited this counting-room were, like itself, peculiar. There were three—corresponding to the bedrooms. The senior was a tall, broad-shouldered, muscular man—a Scotchman—very good-humoured, yet a man whose under lip met the upper with that peculiar degree of precision that indicated that the presence of other qualities besides that of good-humour. He was book-keeper and accountant, and managed the affairs intrusted to his care with the same dogged perseverance with which he would have led an expedition of discovery to the North Pole. He was thirty or thereabouts.

The second was a small man—also a Scotchman. It is curious to note how numerous Scotchmen are in the wilds of North America. This specimen was diminutive and sharp. Moreover, he played the flute—an accomplishment of which he was so proud that he ordered out from England a flute of ebony, so elaborately enriched with silver keys that one's fingers ached to behold it. This beautiful instrument, like most other instruments of a delicate nature, found the climate too much for its constitution, and, soon after the winter began, split from top to bottom. Peter Mactavish, however, was a genius by tendency; so that, instead of giving way to despair, he laboriously bound the flute together with waxed thread, which, although it could not restore it to its pristine elegance, enabled him to play with great effect sundry doleful airs, whose influence, when performed at night, usually sent his companions to sleep, or, failing this, drove them to distraction.

The third inhabitant of the office was a ruddy, smooth-chinned

youth of about fourteen, who had left home seven months before, in the hope of gratifying a desire to lead a wild life, which he had entertained ever since he read "Jack the Giant Killer," and found himself most unexpectedly fastened, during the greater part of each day, to a stool. His name was Harry Somerville, and a fine, cheerful little fellow he was, full of spirits, and curiously addicted to poking and arranging the fire at least every ten minutes—a propensity which tested the forbearance of the senior clerk rather severely, and would have surprised any one not aware of poor Harry's incurable antipathy to the desk, and the yearning desire with which he longed for physical action.

Harry was busily engaged with the refractory fire when Charley, as stated at the conclusion of the last chapter, burst into the room.

"Hollo!" he exclaimed, suspending his operations for a moment, "what's up?"

"Nothing," said Charley, "but father's temper, that's all. He gave me a splendid description of his life in the woods, and then threw his pipe at me because I admired it too much."

"Ho!" exclaimed Harry, making a vigorous thrust at the fire, "then you've no chance now."

"No chance! what do you mean?"

"Only that we are to have a wolf-hunt in the plains to-morrow; and if you've aggravated your father, he'll be taking you home to-night, that's all."

"Oh! no fear of that," said Charley, with a look that seemed to imply that there was a very great fear of "that"—much more, in fact, than he was willing to admit even to himself. "My dear old father never keeps his anger long. I'm sure he'll be all right again in half-an-hour."

"Hope so, but doubt it I do," said Harry, making another deadly poke at the fire, and returning, with a deep sigh, to his stool.

"Would you like to go with us, Charley?" said the senior clerk, laying down his pen and turning round on his chair (the senior clerk never sat on a stool) with a benign smile.

"Oh, very, very much indeed," cried Charley; "but even should father agree to stay all night at the fort, I have no horse, and I'm sure he would not let me have the mare after what I did to-day."

"Do you think he is not open to persuasion?" said the senior clerk.

"No, I'm sure he's not."

"Well, well, it don't much signify; perhaps we can mount you." (Charley's face brightened.) "Go," he continued, addressing Harry Somerville—"go, tell Tom Whyte I wish to speak to him."

Harry sprang from his stool with a suddenness and vigour that might have justified the belief that he had been fixed to it by means of a powerful spring, which had been set free with a sharp recoil, and shot him out at the door, for he disappeared in a trice. In a few minutes he returned, followed by the groom Tom Whyte.

"Tom," said the senior clerk, "Do you think we could manage to mount Charley to-morrow?"

"Why, sir, I don't think as how we could. There ain't an 'oss in the stable except them wot's required and them wot's badly."

"Couldn't he have the brown pony?" suggested the senior clerk.

Tom Whyte was a cockney, and an old soldier, and stood so bolt upright that it seemed quite a marvel how the words ever managed

to climb up the steep ascent of his throat, and turn the corner so as to get out of his mouth. Perhaps this was the cause of his speaking on all occasions with great deliberation and slowness.

"Why, you see, sir," he replied, "the brown pony's got cut under the fetlock of the right hind leg ; and I 'ad 'im down to L'Esperance the smith's, sir, to look at 'im, sir ; and he says to me, says he, 'That don't look well, that 'oss don't,'—and he's a knowing feller, sir, is L'Esperance though he is an 'alf-breed—"

"Never mind what he said, Tom," interrupted the senior clerk ; "is the pony fit for use ? that's the question."

"No, sir, 'e hain't."

"And the black mare, can he not have that ?"

"No, sir ; Mr. Grant is to ride her to-morrow."

"That's unfortunate," said the senior clerk. "I fear, Charley, that you'll need to ride behind Harry on his gray pony. It wouldn't improve his speed to be sure, having two on his back ; but then he's so like a pig in his movements at any rate, I don't think it would spoil his pace much."

"Could he not try the new horse ?" he continued, turning to the groom.

"The new 'oss, sir ! he might as well try to ride a mad buffalo bull, sir. He's quite a young colt, sir, only 'alf broke—kicks like a wind-mill, sir, and's got an 'ead like a steam-engine ; 'e couldn't 'old 'im in no'ow, sir. I 'ad 'im down to the smith 'tother day, sir, an' says 'e to me, says 'e, 'That's a screamer, that is.' 'Yes,' says I, 'that his a fact.' 'Well,' says 'e—"

"Hang the smith !" cried the senior clerk, losing all patience ; "can't you answer me without so much talk ? Is the horse too wild to ride ?"

"Yes, sir, 'e is," said the groom, with a look of slightly offended dignity, and drawing himself up—if we may use such an expression to one who was always drawn up to such an extent that he seemed to be just balanced on his heels, and required only a gentle push to lay him flat on his back.

"Oh, I have it !" cried Peter Mactavish, who had been standing during the conversation with his back to the fire, and a short pipe in his mouth : "John Fowler, the miller, has just purchased a new pony. I'm told it's an old buffalo-runner, and I'm certain he would lend it to Charley at once."

"The very thing," said the senior clerk. "Run, Tom ; give the miller my compliments, and beg the loan of his horse for Charley Kennedy. I think he knows you, Charley ?"

The dinner-bell rang as the groom departed, and the clerks prepared for their mid-day meal.

The senior clerk's order to "*run*" was a mere form of speech, intended to indicate that haste was desirable. No man imagined for a moment that Tom Whyte could, by any possibility, *run*. He hadn't run since he was dismissed from the army, twenty years before, for incurable drunkenness ; and most of Tom's friends entertained the belief that if he ever attempted to run he would crack all over, and go to pieces like a disintombed Egyptian mummy. Tom therefore walked off to the row of buildings inhabited by the men, where he sat down on a bench in front of his bed, and proceeded leisurely to fill his pipe.

The room in which he sat was a fair specimen of the dwellings

devoted to the *employés* of the Hudson's Bay Company throughout the country. It was large, and low in the roof, built entirely of wood, which was unpainted; a matter, however, of no consequence, as, from long exposure to dust and tobacco-smoke, the floor, walls, and ceiling had become one deep uniform brown. The men's beds were constructed after the fashion of berths on board ship, being wooden boxes ranged in tiers round the room. Several tables and benches were strewn miscellaneous about the floor, in the centre of which stood a large double iron stove, with the word "*Carron*" stamped on it. This served at once for cooking, and warming the place. Numerous guns, axes, and canoe-paddles hung round the walls or were piled in corners, and the rafters sustained a miscellaneous mass of materials, the more conspicuous among which were snow-shoes, dog-sledges, axe-handles, and nets.

Having filled and lighted his pipe, Tom Whyte thrust his hands into his deerskin mittens, and sauntered off to perform his errand.

CHAPTER IV

A wolf-hunt in the prairies—Charley astonishes his father, and breaks in the "noo'oss" effectually.

During the long winter that reigns in the northern regions of America, the thermometer ranges, for many months together, from zero down to 20, 30, and 40 degrees *below* it. In different parts of the country the intensity of the frost varies a little, but not sufficiently to make any appreciable change in one's sensation of cold. At York Fort, on the shores of Hudson's Bay, where the winter is eight months long, the spirit-of-wine (mercury being useless in so cold a climate) sometimes falls so low as 50 degrees below zero; and away in the regions of Great Bear Lake it has been known to fall considerably lower than 60 degrees below zero of Fahrenheit. Cold of such intensity, of course, produces many curious and interesting effects, which, although scarcely noticed by the inhabitants, make a strong impression upon the minds of those who visit the country for the first time. A youth goes out to walk on one of the first sharp, frosty mornings. His locks are brown and his face ruddy. In half-an-hour he returns with his face blue, his nose frost-bitten, and his locks *white*—the latter effect being produced by his breath congealing on his hair and breast, until both are covered with hoar-frost. Perhaps he is of a sceptical nature, prejudiced, it may be, in favour of old habits and customs; so that, although told by those who ought to know that it is absolutely necessary so wear moccasins in winter, he prefers the leather boots to which he has been accustomed at home, and goes out with them accordingly. In a few minutes the feet begin to lose sensation. First the toes, as far as feeling goes, vanish; then the heels depart, and he feels the extraordinary and peculiar and altogether disagreeable sensation of one who has had his heels and toes amputated, and is walking about on his insteps. Soon, however, these also fade away, and the unhappy youth rushes frantically home on the stumps of his ankle-bones—at least so it appears to him, and so in reality it would turn out to be if he did not speedily rub the benumbed appendages into vitality again.

The whole country during this season is buried in snow, and the prairies of Red River present the appearance of a sea of the purest white for five or six months of the year. Impelled by hunger, troops of prairie wolves prowl round the settlement, safe from the assault of man in consequence of their light weight permitting them to scamper away on the surface of the snow, into which man or horse, from their greater weight, would sink, so as to render pursuit either fearfully laborious or altogether impossible. In spring, however, when the first thaws begin to take place, and commence that delightful process of disruption which introduces this charming season of the year, the relative position of wolf and man is reversed. The snow becomes suddenly soft, so that the short legs of the wolf, sinking deep into it, fail to reach the solid ground below, and he is obliged to drag heavily along; while the long legs of the horse enable him to plunge through and dash aside the snow at a rate which, although not very fleet, is sufficient nevertheless to overtake the chase and give his rider a chance of shooting it. The inhabitants of Red River are not much addicted to this sport, but the gentlemen of the Hudson's Bay Service sometimes practise it; and it was to a hunt of this description that our young friend Charley Kennedy was now so anxious to go.

The morning was propitious. The sun blazed in dazzling splendour in a sky of deep unclouded blue, while the white prairie glittered as if it were a sea of diamonds rolling out in an unbroken sheet from the walls of the fort to the horizon, and on looking at which one experienced all the pleasurable feelings of being out on a calm day on the wide, wide sea, without the disagreeable consequence of being very, very sick.

The thermometer stood at 39° in the shade, and "everythink," as Tom Whyte emphatically expressed it, "looked a runnin' of right away into slush." That unusual sound, the trickling of water, so inexpressibly grateful to the ears of those who dwell in frosty climes, was heard all around, as the heavy masses of snow on the housetops sent a few adventurous drops gliding down the icicles which depended from the eaves and gables; and there was a balmy softness in the air that told of coming spring. Nature, in fact, seemed to have awakened from her long nap, and was beginning to think of getting up. Like people, however, who venture to delay so long as to *think* about it, Nature frequently turns round and goes to sleep again in her icy cradle for a few weeks after the first awakening.

The scene in the court-yard of Fort Garry harmonized with the cheerful spirit of the morning. Tom Whyte, with that upright solemnity which constituted one of his characteristic features, was standing in the centre of a group of horses, whose energy he endeavoured to restrain with the help of a small Indian boy, to whom meanwhile he imparted a variety of useful and otherwise unattainable information.

"You see, Joseph," said he to the urchin who gazed gravely in his face with a pair of very large and dark eyes, "ponies is often skittish. Reason why one should be, an' another not, I can't comprehend. P'raps it's nat'ral, p'raps not, but howsomediver so 'tis; an' if it's more nor above the likes o' me, Joseph, you needn't be surprised that it's somethink haltogether beyond *you*."

It will not surprise the reader to be told that Joseph made no reply to this speech, having a very imperfect acquaintance with the English

language, especially the peculiar dialect of that tongue in which Tom Whyte was wont to express his ideas, when he had any.

He merely gave a grunt, and continued to gaze at Tom's fishy eyes, which were about as interesting as the face to which they belonged, and *that* might have been mistaken for almost anything.

"Yes, Joseph," he continued, "that's a fact. There's the noo brown 'oss now, *it's* a skittish 'un. And there's Mr. Kennedy's mare, wot's a standin' of beside me, she ain't skittish a bit, though she's plenty of spirit, and wouldn't care hanythink for a five-barred gate. Now, wot I want to know is, wot's the reason why?"

We fear that the reason why, however interesting it might prove to naturalists, must remain a profound secret for ever; for just as the groom was about to entertain Joseph with one of his theories on the point, Charley Kennedy and Harry Somerville hastily approached.

"Ho, Tom!" exclaimed the former, "have you got the miller's pony for me?"

"Why, no, sir; 'e 'adn't got his shoes on, sir, last night—"

"Oh, bother his shoes!" said Charley, in a voice of great disappointment. "Why didn't you bring him up without shoes, man, eh?"

"Well, sir, the miller said 'e'd get 'em put on early this mornin', an' I 'xpect 'ell be 'ere in 'alf-an-hour at farthest, sir."

"Oh, very well," replied Charley, much relieved, but still a little nettled at the bare possibility of being late. "Come along, Harry; let's go and meet him. He'll be long enough of coming if we don't go to poke him up a bit."

"You'd better wait," called out the groom, as the boys hastened away. "If you go by the river, he'll p'raps come by the plains; and if you go by the plains, he'll p'raps come by the river."

Charley and Harry stopped and looked at each other. Then they looked at the groom, and as their eyes surveyed his solemn, cadaverous countenance, which seemed a sort of bad caricature of the long visages of the horses that stood around him, they burst into a simultaneous and prolonged laugh.

"He's a clever old lamp-post," said Harry at last: "we had better remain, Charley."

"You see," continued Tom Whyte, "the pony's 'oofs is an 'orrible state. Last night w'en I see'd 'im I said to the miller, says I, 'John, I'll take 'im down to the smith d'rectly.' 'Very good,' said John. So I 'ad him down to the smith—"

The remainder of Tom's speech was cut short by one of those unforeseen operations of the laws of nature which are peculiar to arctic climates. During the long winter repeated falls of snow cover the housetops with white mantles upwards of a foot thick, which become gradually thicker and more consolidated as winter advances. In spring the suddenness of the thaw loosens these from the sloping roofs, and precipitates them in masses to the ground. These miniature avalanches are dangerous, people having been seriously injured and sometimes killed by them. Now it happened that a very large mass of snow, which lay on and partly depended from the roof of the house near to which the horses were standing, gave way, and just at that critical point in Tom Whyte's speech when he "ad 'im down to the smith," fell with a stunning crash on the back of Mr. Kennedy's gray mare. The mare was not "skittish"—by no means—

according to Tom's idea, but it would have been more than an ordinary mare to have stood the sudden descent of half-a-ton of snow without some symptoms of consciousness. No sooner did it feel the blow than it sent both heels with a bang against the wooden store, by way of preliminary movement, and then rearing up with a wild snort, it sprang over Tom Whyte's head, jerked the reins from his hand, and upset him in the snow. Poor Tom never *bent* to anything. The military despotism under which he had been reared having substituted a touch of the cap for a bow, rendered it unnecessary to bend; prolonged drill, laziness, and rheumatism made it at last impossible. When he stood up, he did so after the manner of a pillar; when he sat down he broke across at two points, much in the way in which a foot-rule would have done had *it* felt disposed to sit down; and when he fell, he came down like an overturned lamp-post. On the present occasion Tom became horizontal in a moment, and from his unfortunate propensity to fall straight, his head, reaching much farther than might have been expected, came into violent contact with the small Indian boy, who fell flat likewise, letting go the reins of the horses, which latter no sooner felt themselves free than they fled, curvetting and snorting round the court, with reins and mains flying in rare confusion.

The two boys, who could scarce stand for laughing, ran to the gates of the fort to prevent the chargers getting free, and in a short time they were again secured, although evidently much elated in spirit.

A few minutes after this Mr. Grant issued from the principal house leaning on Mr. Kennedy's arm, and followed by the senior clerk, Peter Mactavish, and one or two friends who had come to take part in the wolf-hunt. They were all armed with double or single barrelled guns or pistols, according to their several fancies. The two elderly gentlemen alone entered upon the scene without any more deadly weapons than their heavy riding-whips. Young Harry Somerville, who had been strongly advised not to take a gun lest he should shoot himself or his horse or his companions, was content to take the field with a small pocket-pistol, which he crammed to the muzzle with a compound of ball and swan-shot.

"It won't do," said Mr. Grant, in an earnest voice, to his friend, as they walked towards the horses—"it won't do to check him too abruptly, my dear sir."

It was evident that they were recurring to the subject of conversation of the previous day, and it was also evident that the father's wrath was in that very uncertain state when a word or a look can throw it into violent agitation.

"Just permit me," continued Mr. Grant, "to get him sent to the Saskatchewan or Athabasca for a couple of years. By that time he'll have had enough of a rough life, and be only too glad to get a berth at headquarters. If you thwart him now, I feel convinced that he'll break through all restraint."

"Humph!" ejaculated Mr. Kennedy, with a frown.—"Come here, Charley," he said, as the boy approached with a disappointed look to tell of his failure in getting a horse; "I've been talking with Mr. Grant again about this business, and he says he can easily get you into the counting-room here for a year, so you'll make arrangements—"

The old gentleman paused. He was going to have followed his

wonted course by *commanding* instantaneous obedience ; but as his eye fell upon the honest, open, though disappointed face of his son, a gush of tenderness filled his heart. Laying his hand upon Charley's head, he said, in a kind but abrupt tone, "There now, Charley, my boy, make up your mind to give in with a good grace. It'll only be hard work for a year or two, and then plain sailing after that, Charley !"

Charley's clear blue eyes filled with tears as the accents of kindness fell upon his ear.

It is strange that men should frequently be so blind to the potent influence of kindness. Independently of the Divine authority, which assures us that "a soft answer turneth away wrath," and that "*love is the fulfilling of the law*," who has not, in the course of his experience, felt the overwhelming power of a truly affectionate word ; not a word which possesses merely an affectionate signification, but a word spoken with a gush of tenderness, where love rolls in the tone, and beams in the eye, and revels in every wrinkle of the face ? And how much more powerfully does such a word or look or tone strike home to the heart if uttered by one whose lips are not much accustomed to the formation of honeyed words or sweet sentences ! Had Mr. Kennedy, senior, known more of this power, and put it frequently to the proof, we venture to affirm that Mr. Kennedy, junior, would have *allowed* his "*flint to be fixed*" (as his father pithily expressed it) long ago.

Ere Charley could reply to the question, Mr. Grant's voice, pitched in an elevated key, interrupted them.

"Eh ! what ?" said that gentleman to Tom Whyte. "No horse for Charley ! How's that ?"

"No, sir," said Tom.

"Where's the brown pony ?" said Mr. Grant, abruptly.

"Cut 'is fetlock, sir," said Tom, slowly.

"And the new horse ?"

"Tan't 'alf broke yet, sir."

"Ah ! that's bad. It wouldn't do to take an unbroken charger, Charley ; for although you are a pretty good rider, you couldn't manage him, I fear. Let me see."

"Please, sir," said the groom, touching his hat, "I've borrowed the miller's pony for 'im, and 'e's sure to be 'ere in 'alf-a-hour at farthest."

"Oh, that'll do," said Mr. Grant ; "you can soon overtake us. We shall ride slowly out, straight into the prairie, and Harry will remain behind to keep you company."

So saying, Mr. Grant mounted his horse and rode out at the back gate, followed by the whole cavalcade.

"Now this is too bad !" said Charley, looking with a very perplexed air at his companion. "What's to be done ?"

Harry evidently did not know what was to be done, and made no difficulty of saying so in a very sympathizing tone. Moreover he begged Charley very earnestly to take *his* pony, but this the other would not hear of ; so they came to the conclusion that there was nothing for it but to wait as patiently as possible for the arrival of the expected horse. In the meantime Harry proposed a saunter in the field adjoining the fort. Charley assented, and the two friends walked away, leading the gray pony along with them.

To the right of Fort Garry was a small enclosure, at the extreme end of which commences a growth of willows and underwood, which gradually increases in size till it becomes a pretty thick belt of woodland, skirting up the river for many miles. Here stood the stable belonging to the establishment; and as the boys passed it, Charley suddenly conceived a strong desire to see the renowned 'noo 'oss,' which Tom Whyte had said was only 'alf broke; ' so he turned the key, opened the door, and went in.

There was nothing *very* peculiar about this horse, excepting that his legs seemed rather long for his body, and upon a closer examination, there was a noticeable breadth of nostril and a latent fire in his eye, indicating a good deal of spirit, which, like Charley's own, required taming.

"Oh," said Charley, "what a splendid fellow! I say Harry, I'll go out with *him*."

"You'd better not."

"Why not?"

"Why? just because if you do Mr. Grant will be down upon you, and your father won't be very well pleased."

"Nonsense," cried Charley. "Father didn't say I wasn't to take him. I don't think he'd care much. He's not afraid of my breaking my neck. And then, Mr. Grant seemed to be only afraid of my being run off with—not of his horse being hurt. Here goes for it!" In another moment Charley had him saddled and bridled, and led him out into the yard.

"Why, I declare, he's quite quiet; just like a lamb," said Harry in surprise.

"So he is," replied Charley. "He's a capital charger; and even if he does bolt, he can't run five hundred miles at a stretch. If I turn his head to the prairies, the Rocky Mountains are the first things that will bring him up. So let him run if he likes, I don't care a fig." And springing lightly into the saddle, he cantered out of the yard, followed by his friend.

The young horse was a well-formed, showy animal, with a good deal of bone—perhaps too much for elegance. He was of a beautiful dark brown, and carried a high head and tail, with a high-stepping gait, that gave him a noble appearance. As Charley cantered along at a steady pace, he could discover no symptoms of the refractory spirit which had been ascribed to him.

"Let us strike out straight for the horizon now," said Harry, after they had galloped half-a-mile or so along the beaten track. "See, here are the tracks of our friends." Turning sharp round as he spoke he leaped his pony over the heap that lined the road, and galloped away through the soft snow.

At this point the young horse began to show his evil spirit. Instead of following the other, he suddenly halted and began to back.

"Hollo, Harry!" exclaimed Charley; "hold on a bit. Here's this monster begun his tricks."

"Hit him a crack with the whip," shouted Harry.

Charley acted upon the advice, which had the effect of making the horse shake his head with a sharp snort, and back more vigorously than ever.

"There, my fine fellow, quiet now," said Charley, in a soothing tone, patting the horse's neck. "It's a comfort to know you can't go far in

that direction, anyhow!" he added, as he glanced over his shoulder, and saw an immense drift behind.

He was right. In a few minutes the horse backed into the snow-drift. Finding his hind-quarters imprisoned by a power that was too much even for *his* obstinacy to overcome, he gave another snort and a heavy plunge, which almost unseated his young rider.

"Hold on fast," cried Harry, who had now come up.

"No fear," cried Charley, as he clenched his teeth and gathered the reins more firmly.—"Now for it, you young villain!" and raising his whip, he brought it down with a heavy slash on the horse's flank.

Had the snow-drift been a cannon, and the horse a bombshell, he could scarcely have sprung from it with greater velocity. One bound landed him on the road; another cleared it; and, in a second more, he stretched out at full speed—his ears flat on his neck, mane and tail flying in the wind, and the bit tight between his teeth.

"Well done," cried Harry, as he passed. "You're off now, old fellow; good-bye."

"Hurrah!" shouted Charley, in reply, leaving his cap in the snow as a parting souvenir; while, seeing that it was useless to endeavour to check his steed, he became quite wild with excitement; gave him the rein; flourished his whip; and flew over the white plains, casting up the snow in clouds behind him like a hurricane.

While this little escapade was being enacted by the boys, the hunters were riding leisurely out upon the snowy sea in search of a wolf.

Words cannot convey to you, dear reader, an adequate conception of the peculiar fascination, the exhilarating splendour of the scene by which our hunters were surrounded. Its beauty lay not in variety of feature in the landscape, for there was none. One vast sheet of white alone met the view, bounded all round by the blue circle of the sky, and broken, in one or two places, by a patch or two of willows, which, rising on the plain, appeared like little islands in a frozen sea. It was the glittering sparkle of the snow in the bright sunshine; the dreamy haziness of the atmosphere, mingling earth and sky as in a halo of gold; the first taste the first *smell* of spring after a long winter, bursting suddenly upon the senses, like the unexpected visit of a long-absent, much-loved, and almost forgotten friend; the soft, warm feeling of the south wind, bearing on its wings the balmy influences of sunny climes, and recalling vividly the scenes, the pleasures the bustling occupations of summer. It was this that caused the hunters' hearts to leap within them as they rode along—that induced old Mr. Kennedy to forget his years, and shout as he had been wont to do in days gone by, when he used to follow the track of the elk or hunt the wild buffalo; and it was this that made the otherwise monotonous prairies, on this particular day, so charming.

The party had wandered about without discovering anything that bore the smallest resemblance to a wolf, for upwards of an hour; Fort Garry had fallen astern (to use a nautical phrase) until it had become a mere speck on the horizon, and vanished altogether; Peter Mactavish had twice given a false alarm, in the eagerness of his spirit, and had three times plunged his horse up to the girths in a snow-drift; the senior clerk was waxing impatient, and the horses restive, when a sudden "Hollo!" from Mr. Grant brought the whole cavalcade to a stand.

The object which drew his attention, and to which he directed the anxious eyes of his friends, was a small speck, rather triangular in form, which overtopped a little willow bush not more than five or six hundred yards distant.

"There he is!" exclaimed Mr. Grant. "That's a fact," cried Mr. Kennedy; and both gentlemen, instantaneously giving a shout, bounded towards the object; not, however, before the senior clerk, who was mounted on a fleet and strong horse, had taken the lead by six yards. A moment afterwards the speck rose up and discovered itself to be a veritable wolf. Moreover, he condescended to show his teeth, and then, conceiving it probable that his enemies were too numerous for him, he turned suddenly round and fled away. For ten minutes or so the chase was kept up at full speed, and as the snow happened to be shallow at the starting-point, the wolf kept well ahead of his pursuers—indeed, distanced them a little. But soon the snow became deeper, and the wolf plunged heavily, and the horses gained considerably. Although to the eye the prairies seemed to be a uniform level, there were numerous slight undulations, in which drifts of some depth had collected. Into one of these the wolf now plunged and laboured slowly through it. But so deep was the snow that the horses almost stuck fast. A few minutes, however, brought them out, and Mr. Grant and Mr. Kennedy, who had kept close to each other during the run, pulled up for a moment on the summit of a ridge to breathe their panting steeds.

"What can that be?" exclaimed the former, pointing with his whip to a distant object which was moving rapidly over the plain.

"Eh! what—where?" said Mr. Kennedy, shading his eyes with his hand, and peering in the direction indicated. "Why, that's another wolf, isn't it? No; it runs too fast for that."

"Strange," said his friend; "what *can* it be?"

"If I hadn't seen every beast in the country," remarked Mr. Kennedy, "and didn't know that there are no such animals north of the equator, I should say it was a mad dromedary mounted by a ring-tailed roarer."

"It can't be, surely—not possible!" exclaimed Mr. Grant. "It's not Charley on the new horse!"

Mr. Grant said this with an air of vexation that annoyed his friend a little. He would not have much minded Charley's taking a horse without leave, no matter how wild it might be; but he did not at all relish the idea of making an apology for his son's misconduct, and for the moment did not exactly know what to say. As usual in such a dilemma, the old man took refuge in a towering passion, gave his steed a sharp cut with the whip, and galloped forward to meet the delinquent.

We are not acquainted with the general appearance of "a ring-tailed roarer;" in fact, we have grave doubts as to whether such an animal exists at all; but if it does, and is particularly wild, dishevelled, and fierce in deportment, there is no doubt whatever that when Mr. Kennedy applied the name to his hopeful son, the application was singularly powerful and appropriate.

Charley had had a long run since we last saw him. After describing a wide curve, in which his charger displayed a surprising aptitude for picking out the ground that was least covered with snow, he headed straight for the fort again at the same pace at which he had

started. At first Charley tried every possible method to check him, but in vain ; so he gave it up, resolving to enjoy the race, since he could not prevent it. The young horse seemed to be made of lightning, with bones and muscles of brass ; for he bounded untiringly forward for miles, tossing his head and snorting in his wild career. But Charley was a good horseman, and did not mind *that* much, being quite satisfied that the horse *was* a horse and not a spirit, and that therefore he could not run for ever. At last he approached the party, in search of which he had originally set out. His eyes dilated and his colour heightened as he beheld the wolf running directly towards him. Fumbling hastily for the pistol which he had borrowed from his friend Harry, he drew it from his pocket, and prepared to give the animal a shot in passing. Just at that moment the wolf caught sight of this new enemy in advance, and diverged suddenly to the left, plunging into a drift in his confusion, and so enabling the senior clerk to overtake him, and send an ounce of heavy shot into his side, which turned him over quite dead. The shot, however, had a double effect. At that instant Charley swept past ; and his mettlesome steed swerved as it heard the loud report of the gun, thereby almost unhorsing his rider, and causing him unintentionally to discharge the conglomerate of bullets and swan-shot into the flank of Peter Mactavish's horse—fortunately at a distance which rendered the shot equivalent to a dozen very sharp and particularly stinging blows. On receiving this unexpected salute, the astonished charger reared convulsively, and fell back upon his rider, who was thereby buried deep in the snow, not a vestige of him being left, no more than if he had never existed at all. Indeed, for a moment it seemed to be doubtful whether poor Peter *did* exist or not, until a sudden unheaving of the snow took place, and his dishevelled head appeared, with the eyes and mouth wide open, bearing on them an expression of mingled horror and amazement. Meanwhile the second shot acted like a spur on the young horse, which flew past Mr. Kennedy like a whirlwind.

"Stop, you young scoundrel!" he shouted, shaking his fist at Charley as he passed.

Charley was past stopping, either by inclination or ability. This sudden and unexpected accumulation of disasters was too much for him. As he passed his sire, with his brown curls streaming straight out behind, and his eyes flashing with excitement, his teeth clinched, and his horse tearing along more like an incarnate fiend than an animal, a spirit of combined recklessness, consternation, indignation, and glee took possession of him. He waved his whip wildly over his head, brought it down with a swinging cut on the horse's neck, and uttered a shout of defiance that threw completely into the shade the loudest war-whoop that was ever uttered by the brazen lungs of the wildest savage between Hudson's Bay and Oregon. Seeing and hearing this, old Mr. Kennedy wheeled about and dashed off in pursuit with much greater energy than he had displayed in chase of the wolf.

The race bade fair to be a long one, for the young horse was strong in wind and limb ; and the grey mare, though decidedly not "the better horse," was much fresher than the other.

The hunters, who were now joined by Harry Somerville, did not feel it incumbent on them to follow this new chase ; so they contented themselves with watching their flight towards the fort, while they followed at a more leisurely pace.

Meanwhile Charley rapidly neared Fort Garry, and now began to wonder whether the stable door was open, and if so, whether it were better for him to take his chance of getting his neck broken, or to throw himself into the next snow-drift that presented itself.

He had not to remain long in suspense. The wooden fence that enclosed the stable-yard lay before him. It was between four and five feet high, with a beaten track running along the outside, and a deep snow-drift on the other. Charley felt that the young horse had made up his mind to leap this. As he did not at the moment see that there was anything better to be done, he prepared for it. As the horse bent on his haunches to spring, he gave him a smart cut with the whip, went over like a rocket, and plunged up to the neck in the snow-drift; which brought his career to an abrupt conclusion. The sudden stoppage of the horse was *one* thing, but the arresting of Master Charley was *another* and quite a different thing. The instant his charger landed, he left the saddle like a harlequin, described an extensive curve in the air, and fell head foremost into the drift, above which his boots and three inches of his legs alone remained to tell the tale.

On witnessing this climax, Mr. Kennedy, senior, pulled up, dismounted, and ran—with an expression of some anxiety on his countenance—to the help of his son; while Tom Whyte came out of the stable just in time to receive the “noo’oss” as he floundered out of the snow.

“I believe,” said the groom, as he surveyed the trembling charger, “that your son has broke the noo’oss, sir, better nor I could ’ave done myself.”

“I believe that my son has broken his neck,” said Mr. Kennedy wrathfully. “Come here and help me to dig him out.”

In a few minutes Charley was dug out, in a state of insensibility, and carried up to the fort, where he was laid on a bed, and restoratives actively applied for his recovery.

CHAPTER V.

Peter Mactavish becomes an amateur doctor; Charley promulgates his views of things in general to Kate; and Kate waxes sagacious.

Shortly after the catastrophe just related, Charley opened his eyes to consciousness, and aroused himself out of a prolonged fainting fit, under the combined influence of a strong constitution and the medical treatment of his friends.

Medical treatment in the wilds of North America, by the way, is very original in its character, and is founded on principles so vague that no one has ever been found capable of stating them clearly. Owing to the stubborn fact that there are no doctors in the country, men have been thrown upon their own resources, and as a natural consequence *every* man is a doctor. True, there *are* two, it may be three, real doctors in the Hudson’s Bay Company’s employment; but as one of these is resident on the shores of Hudson’s Bay, another in Oregon, and a third in Red River Settlement, they are not considered available for every case of emergency that may chance to occur in the hundreds of little outposts, scattered far and wide over the whole

continent of North America, with miles and miles of primeval wilderness between each. We do not think, therefore, that when we say there are *no* doctors in the country, we use a culpable amount of exaggeration.

If a man gets ill, he goes on till he gets better; and if he doesn't get better, he dies. To avert such an undesirable consummation, desperate and random efforts are made in an amateur way. The old proverb that "extremes meet" is verified. And in a land where no doctors are to be had for love or money, doctors meet you at every turn, ready to practise on everything, with anything, and all for nothing, on the shortest possible notice. As may be supposed, the practice is novel, and not unfrequently extremely wild. Tooth-drawing is considered child's play—mere blacksmith's work; bleeding is a general remedy for everything, when all else fails; castor-oil, Epsom salts, and emetics are the three keynotes, the foundations, and the keystone of the system.

In Red River there is only one *genuine* doctor; and as the settlement is fully sixty miles long, he has enough to do, and cannot always be found when wanted, so that Charley had to rest content with amateur treatment in the meantime. Peter Mactavish was the first to try his powers. He was aware that laudanum had the effect of producing sleep, and seeing that Charley looked somewhat sleepy after recovering consciousness, he thought it advisable to help out that propensity to slumber, and went to the medicine-chest, whence he extracted a small phial of tincture of rhubarb, the half of which he emptied into a wine-glass, under the impression that it was laudanum, and poured down Charley's throat! The poor boy swallowed a little, and sputtered the remainder over the bed-clothes. It may be remarked here, that Mactavish was a wild, happy, half-mad sort of fellow—wonderfully erudite in regard to some things, and profoundly ignorant in regard to others. Medicine, it need scarcely be added, was not his *forte*. Having accomplished this feat to his satisfaction, he sat down to watch by the bedside of his friend. Peter had taken this opportunity to indulge in a little private practice just after several of the other gentlemen had left the office, under the impression that Charley had better remain quiet for a short time.

"Well, Peter," whispered Mr. Kennedy, senior, putting his head in at the door (it was Harry's room in which Charley lay), "how is he now?"

"Oh! doing capitally," replied Peter, in a hoarse whisper, at the same time rising and entering the office, while he gently closed the door behind him. "I gave him a small dose of physic, which I think has done him good. He's sleeping like a top now."

Mr. Kennedy frowned slightly, and made one or two remarks in reference to physic which were not calculated to gratify the ears of a physician.

"What did you give him?" he inquired abruptly.

"Only a little laudanum."

"Only, indeed! it's all trash together, and that's the worst kind of trash you could have given him. Humph!" and the old gentleman jerked his shoulders testily.

"How much did you give him?" said the senior clerk, who had entered the apartment with Harry a few minutes before.

"Not quite a wineglassful," replied Peter, somewhat subdued.

"A what!" cried the father, starting from his chair as if he had received an electric shock, and rushing into the adjoining room, up and down which he raved in a state of distraction, being utterly ignorant of what should be done under the circumstances.

"O dear!" gasped Peter, turning pale as death.

Poor Harry Somerville fell rather than leaped off his stool, and dashed into the bedroom, where old Mr. Kennedy was occupied in alternately heaping unutterable abuse on the head of Peter Mactavish, and imploring him to advise what was best to be done. But Peter knew not. He could only make one or two insane proposals to roll Charley about the floor, and see if *that* would do him any good; while Harry suggested in desperation that he should be hung by the heels, and perhaps it would run out!

Meanwhile the senior clerk seized his hat, with the intention of going in search of Tom Whyte, and rushed out at the door; which he had no sooner done than he found himself tightly embraced in the arms of that worthy, who happened to be entering at the moment, and who, in consequence of the sudden onset, was pinned up against the wall of the porch.

"Oh, my buzzum!" exclaimed Tom, laying his hand on his breast—"you've a'most bu'st me, sir. What's wrong, sir?"

"Go for the doctor, Tom, quick! run like the wind. Take the freshest horse; fly, Tom, Charley's poisoned—laudanum; quick!"

"Eavens an' 'arth!" ejaculated the groom, wheeling round, and stalking rapidly off to the stable like a pair of insane compasses, while the senior clerk returned to the bedroom, where he found Mr. Kennedy still raving, Peter Mactavish still aghast and deadly pale and Harry Somerville staring like a maniac at his young friend, as if he expected every moment to see him explode, although, to all appearance, he was sleeping soundly, and comfortably too, notwithstanding the noise that was going on around him. Suddenly Harry's eye rested on the label of the half-empty phial, and he uttered a loud, prolonged cheer.

"It's only tincture of—"

"Wild cats and furies!" cried Mr. Kennedy, turning sharply round and seizing Harry by the collar, "why d'you kick up such a row, eh?"

"It's only tincture of rhubarb," repeated the boy, disengaging himself and holding up the phial triumphantly.

"So it is, I declare," exclaimed Mr. Kennedy, in a tone that indicated intense relief of mind; while Peter Mactavish uttered a sigh so deep that one might suppose a burden of innumerable tons weight had just been removed from his breast.

Charley had been roused from his slumbers by this last ebullition; but on being told what had caused it, he turned languidly round on his pillow and went to sleep again, while his friends departed and left him to repose.

Tom Whyte failed to find the doctor. The servant told him that her master had been suddenly called to set a broken leg that morning for a trapper who lived ten miles *down* the river, and on his return had found a man waiting with a horse and cariole, who carried him violently away to see his wife, who had been taken suddenly ill at a house twenty miles *up* the river, and so she didn't expect him back that night.

"An' where has 'e been took to?" inquired Tom.

She couldn't tell; she knew it was somewhere about the White-horse Plains, but she didn't know more than that.

"Did 'e not say w'en 'e'd be 'ome?"

"No, he didn't."

"Oh dear!" said Tom, rubbing his long nose in great perplexity.

"It's an 'orrible case o' sudden and unexpected pison."

She was sorry for it, but couldn't help that; and thereupon, bidding him good-morning, shut the door.

Tom's wits had come to that condition which just precedes "giving it up" as hopeless, when it occurred to him that he was not far from old Mr. Kennedy's residence; so he stepped into the cariole again and drove thither. On his arrival, he threw poor Mrs. Kennedy and Kate into great consternation by his exceedingly graphic, and more than slightly exaggerated, account of what had brought him in search of the doctor. At first Mrs. Kennedy resolved to go up to Fort Garry immediately, but Kate persuaded her to remain at home, by pointing out that she could herself go, and if anything very serious had occurred (which she didn't believe), Mr. Kennedy could come down for her immediately, while she (Kate) could remain to nurse her brother.

In a few minutes Kate and Tom were seated side by side in the little cariole, driving swiftly up the frozen river; and two hours later the former was seated by her brother's bedside, watching him as he slept with a look of tender affection and solicitude.

Rousing himself from his slumbers, Charley looked vacantly round the room.

"Have you slept well, darling?" inquired Kate, laying her hand lightly on his forehead.

"Slept—eh! oh yes, I've slept. I say, Kate, what a precious bump I came down on my head, to be sure!"

"Hush, Charley!" said Kate, perceiving that he was becoming energetic. "Father said you were to keep quiet—and so do I," she added, with a frown. "Shut your eyes, sir, and go to sleep."

Charley complied by shutting his eyes, and opening his mouth, and uttering a succession of deep snores.

"Now, you bad boy," said Kate, "why *won't* you try to rest?"

"Because, Kate dear," said Charley, opening his eyes again—"because I feel as if I had slept a week at least; and not being one of the seven sleepers, I don't think it necessary to do more in that way just now. Besides, my sweet but particularly wicked sister, I wish just at this moment to have a talk with you."

"But are you sure it won't do you harm to talk? do you feel quite strong enough?"

"Quite: Samson was a mere infant compared to me."

"Oh, don't talk nonsense, Charley dear, and keep your hands quiet, and don't lift the clothes with your knees in that way, else I'll go away and leave you."

"Very well, my pet, if you do I'll get up and dress and follow you, that's all! But come, Kate, tell me first of all how it was that I got pitched off that long-legged rhinoceros, and who it was that picked me up and why wasn't I killed, and how did I come here; for my head is sadly confused, and I scarcely recollect anything that has happened; and before commencing your discourse, Kate, please hand me a glass of water, for my mouth is as dry as a whistle."

Kate handed him a glass of water, smoothed his pillow, brushed the curls gently off his forehead, and sat down on the bedside.

"Thank you, Kate ; now go on."

"Well, you see," she began—

"Pardon me, dearest," interrupted Charley, "if you would please to look at me you would observe that my two eyes are tightly closed, so that I don't see at all."

"Well, then, you must understand—"

"Must I ? oh !—"

"That after that wicked horse leaped with you over the stable fence, you were thrown high into the air, and turning completely round, fell head foremost into the snow, and your poor head went through the top of an old cask that had been buried there all winter."

"Dear me !" ejaculated Charley ; "did any one see me, Kate ?"

"Oh yes."

"Who ?" asked Charley, somewhat anxiously ; "not Mrs. Grant, I hope ? for if she did she'd never let me hear the last of it."

"No ; only our father, who was chasing you at the time," replied Kate, with a merry laugh.

"And no one else ?"

"No—oh yes, by-the-bye, Tom Whyte was there too."

"Oh, he's nobody ! Go on."

"But tell me, Charley, why do you care about Mrs. Grant seeing you ?"

"Oh ! no reason at all, only she's such an abominable quiz."

We must guard the reader here against the supposition that Mrs. Grant was a quiz of the ordinary kind. She was by no means a sprightly, clever woman, rather fond of a joke than otherwise, as the term might lead you to suppose. Her corporeal frame was very large, excessively fat, and remarkably unwieldy ; being an appropriate casket in which to enshrine a mind of the heaviest and most sluggish nature. She spoke little, ate largely, and slept much—the latter recreation being very frequently enjoyed in a large arm-chair of a peculiar kind. It had been a water butt, which her ingenious husband had cut half-way down the middle, then half-way across, and in the angle thus formed fixed a bottom, which, together with the back, he padded with tow, and covered the whole with a mantle of glaring bed-curtain chintz, whose pattern alternated in stripes of sky-blue and china roses, with broken fragments of the rainbow between. Notwithstanding her excessive slowness, however, Mrs. Grant was fond of taking a firm hold of anything or any circumstance in the character or affairs of her friends, and twitting them thereupon in a grave but persevering manner that was exceedingly irritating. No one could ever ascertain whether Mrs. Grant did this in a sly way or not, as her visage never expressed anything except unalterable good-humour. She was a good wife and an affectionate mother ; had a family of ten children, and could boast of never having had more than one quarrel with her husband. This disagreement was occasioned by a rather awkward mischance. One day, not long after her last baby was born, Mrs. Grant waddled towards her tub with the intention of enjoying her accustomed siesta. A few minutes previously, her seventh child, which was just able to walk, had scrambled up into the seat and fallen fast asleep there. As has been already said, Mrs. Grant's intellect was never very bright, and

at this particular time she was rather drowsy, so that she did not observe the child, and on reaching her chair, turned round preparatory to letting herself plump into it. She always *plumped* into her chair. Her muscles were too soft to lower her gently down into it. Invariably on reaching a certain point they ceased to act, and let her down with a crash. She had just reached this point, and her baby's hopes and prospects were on the eve of being cruelly crushed for ever, when Mr. Grant noticed the impending calamity. He had no time to warn her, for she had already passed the point at which her powers of muscular endurance terminated; so grasping the chair, he suddenly withdrew it with such force that the baby rolled off upon the floor like a hedgehog, straightened out flat, and gave vent to an outrageous roar, while its horror-struck mother came to the ground with a sound resembling the fall of an enormous sack of wool. Although the old lady could not see exactly that there was anything very blameworthy in her husband's conduct upon this occasion, yet her nerves had received so severe a shock that she refused to be comforted for two entire days.

But to return from this digression. After Charley had two or three times recommended Kate (who was a little inclined to be quizzical) to proceed, she continued,—

"Well, then, you were carried up here by father and Tom Whyte, and put to bed, and after a good deal of rubbing and rough treatment you were got round. Then Peter Mactavish nearly poisoned you; but fortunately he was such a goose that he did not think of reading the label of the phial, and so gave you a dose of tincture of rhubarb instead of laudanum, as he had intended; and then father flew into a passion, and Tom Whyte was sent to fetch the doctor, and couldn't find him; but fortunately he found me, which was much better, I think, and brought me up here. And so here I am, and here I intend to remain."

"And so that's the end of it. Well, Kate, I'm very glad it was no worse."

"And I am very *thankful*," said Kate, with emphasis on the word, "that it's no worse."

"Oh, well, you know, Kate, I *meant* that, of course."

"But you did not *say* it," replied his sister earnestly.

"To be sure not," said Charley gaily; "it would be absurd to be always making solemn speeches, and things of that sort, every time one has a little accident."

"True, Charley; but when one has a very serious accident, and escapes unhurt, don't you think that *then* it would be—"

"Oh yes, to be sure," interrupted Charley, who still strove to turn Kate from her serious frame of mind; "but, sister dear, how could I possibly *say* I was thankful, with my head crammed into an old cask and my feet pointing up to the blue sky, eh?"

Kate smiled at this, and laid her hand on his arm, while she bent over the pillow and looked tenderly into his eyes.

"Oh, my darling Charley, you are disposed to jest about it; but I cannot tell you how my heart trembled this morning when I heard from Tom Whyte of what had happened. As we drove up to the fort, I thought how terrible it would have been if you had been killed; and then the happy days we have spent together rushed into my mind, and I thought of the willow creek where we used to fish for gold-eyes, and the spot in the woods where we have so often

chased the little birds, and the lake in the prairies where we used to go in spring to watch the water fowl sporting in the sunshine. When I recalled these things, Charley, and thought of you as dead, I felt as if I should die too. And when I came here and found that my fears were needless, that you were alive and safe, and almost well, I felt thankful—yes, very, very thankful—to God for sparing your life, my dear, dear Charley.” And Kate laid her head on his bosom and sobbed, when she thought of what might have been, as if her very heart would break.

Charley’s disposition to levity entirely vanished while his sister spoke; and twining his tough little arm round her neck, he pressed her fervently to his heart.

“Bless you, Kate,” he said at length. “I am indeed thankful to God, not only for sparing my life but for giving me such a darling sister to live for. But now, Kate, tell me, what do you think of father’s determination to have me placed in the office here?”

“Indeed, I think it’s very hard. Oh, I do wish so much that I could do it for you,” said Kate with a sigh.

“Do *what* for me?” asked Charley.

“Why, the office work,” said Kate.

“Tuts! fiddlesticks! But isn’t it now really a *very* hard case?”

“Indeed it is; but, then, what can you do?”

“Do?” said Charley impatiently; “run away to be sure.”

“Oh, don’t speak of that!” said Kate anxiously. You know it will kill our beloved mother; and then it would grieve father very much.

“Well, father don’t care much about grieving me, when he hunted me down like a wolf till I nearly broke my neck.”

“Now, Charley, you must not speak so. Father loves you tenderly, although he is a little rough at times. If you only heard how kindly he speaks of you to our mother when you are away, you could not think of giving him so much pain. And then the Bible says, ‘Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee;’ and as God speaks in the Bible, *surely* we should pay attention to it!”

Charley was silent for a few seconds; then heaving a deep sigh, he said,—

“Well, I believe you’re right, Kate; but then, what am I to do? If I don’t run away, I must live, like poor Harry Somerville, on a long-legged stool; and if I do *that*, I’ll—I’ll—”

As Charley spoke, the door opened, and his father entered.

“Well, my boy,” said he, seating himself on the bedside and taking his son’s hand, “how goes it now? Head getting all right again? I fear that Kate has been talking too much to you.—Is it so, you little chatterbox?”

Mr. Kennedy parted Kate’s clustering ringlets and kissed her forehead.

Charley assured his father that he was almost well, and much the better of having Kate to tend him. In fact, he felt so much revived that he said he would get up and go out for a walk.

“Had I not better tell Tom Whyte to saddle the young horse for you?” said his father, half ironically. “No, no, boy; lie still where you are to-day, and get up if you feel better to-morrow. In the meantime, I’ve come to say good-bye, as I intend to go home to relieve

your mother's anxiety about you. I'll see you again, probably, the day after to-morrow. Hark you, boy ; I've been talking your affairs over again with Mr. Grant, and we've come to the conclusion to give you a run in the woods for a time. You'll have to be ready to start early in spring with the first brigades for the north. So adieu !"

Mr Kennedy patted him on the head, and hastily left the room.

A burning blush of shame arose on Charley's cheek as he recollected his late remarks about his father ; and then, recalling the purport of his last words, he sent forth an exulting shout as he thought of the coming spring.

"Well now, Charley," said Kate with an arch smile, "let us talk seriously over your arrangements for running away."

Charley replied by seizing the pillow and throwing it at his sister's head ; but being accustomed to such eccentricities, she anticipated the movement and evaded the blow.

"Ah, Charley," cried Kate, laughing, "you mustn't let your hand get out of practice ! That was a shockingly bad shot for a man thirsting to become a bear and buffalo hunter !"

"I'll make my fortune at once," cried Charley, as Kate replaced the pillow, "build a wooden castle on the shores of Great Bear Lake, take you to keep house for me, and when I'm out hunting you'll fish for whales in the lake, and we'll live there to a good old age ; so good-night, Kate dear, and go to bed."

Kate laughed, gave her brother a parting kiss, and left him.

CHAPTER VI.

Spring and the Voyageurs.

WINTER, with its snow and its ice ; winter, with its sharp winds and white drifts ; winter, with its various characteristic occupations and employments, is past and it is spring now.

The sun no longer glitters on fields of white ; the woodman's axe is no longer heard hacking the oaken billets, to keep alive the roaring fires. That inexpressibly cheerful sound the merry chime of sleigh-bells, that tells more of winter than all other sounds together, is no longer heard on the bosom of Red River ; for the sleighs are thrown aside as useless lumber—carts and gigs have supplanted them. The old Canadian, who used to drive the ox with its water-barrel to the ice-hole for his daily supply, has substituted a small cart with wheels for the old sleigh that used to glide so smoothly over the snow, and *grit* so sharply on it in the more than usually frosty mornings in the days gone by. The trees have lost their white patches, and the clumps of willows, that used to look like islands in the prairie, have disappeared, as the carpeting that gave them a prominence has dissolved. The aspect of everything in the isolated settlement has changed. The winter is gone, and spring—bright, beautiful, hilarious spring—has come again.

By those who have never known an arctic winter, the delights of an arctic spring can never, we fear, be fully appreciated or understood. Contrast is one of its strongest elements ; indeed, we might say, *the* element which gives to all the others peculiar zest. Life in the arctic regions is like one of Turner's pictures, in which the lights are

strong, the shadows deep, and the *tout ensemble* hazy and romantic. So cold and prolonged is the winter, that the first mild breath of spring breaks on the senses like a zephyr from the plains of paradise. Everything bursts suddenly into vigorous life, after the long death-like sleep of Nature ; as little children burst into the romping gaieties of a new day, after the deep repose of a long and tranquil night. The snow melts, the ice breaks up, and rushes in broken masses, heaving and tossing in the rising floods, that grind and whirl them into the ocean, or into those great fresh-water lakes that vie with ocean itself in magnitude and grandeur. The buds come out and the leaves appear, clothing all nature with a bright refreshing green, which derives additional brilliancy from sundry patches of snow, that fill the deep creeks and hollows everywhere, and form ephemeral fountains whose waters continue to supply a thousand rills for many a long day, until the fierce glare of the summer sun prevails at last and melts them all away.

Red River flows on now to mix its long-pent-up waters with Lake Winnipeg. Boats are seen rowing about upon its waters, as the settlers travel from place to place ; and wooden canoes, made of the hollowed-out trunks of large trees, shoot across from shore to shore—these canoes being a substitute for bridges, of which there are none, although the settlement lies on both sides of the river. Birds have now entered upon the scene, their wild cries and ceaseless flight adding to it a cheerful activity. Ground squirrels pop up out of their holes, to bask their round, fat, beautifully-striped little bodies in the sun, or to gaze in admiration at the farmer, as he urges a pair of *very* slow-going oxen, that drag the plough at a pace which induces one to believe that the wide field *may* possibly be ploughed up by the end of next year. Frogs whistle in the marshy grounds so loudly that men new to the country believe they are being regaled by the songs of millions of birds. There is no mistake about their *whistle*. It is not merely *like* a whistle, but it *is* a whistle, shrill and continuous ; and as the swamps swarm with these creatures, the song never ceases for a moment, although each individual frog creates only *one* little gush of music, composed of half-a-dozen trills, and then stops a moment for breath before commencing the second bar. Bull-frogs, too, though not so numerous, help to vary the sound by croaking vociferously, as if they understood the value of bass, and were glad of having an opportunity to join in the universal hum of life and joy which rises everywhere, from the river and the swamp, the forest and the prairie, to welcome back the spring.

Such was the state of things in Red River one beautiful morning in April, when a band of voyageurs lounged in scattered groups about the front gate of Fort Garry. They were as fine a set of picturesque manly fellows as one could desire to see. Their mode of life rendered them healthy, hardy, and good-humoured, with a strong dash of recklessness—perhaps too much of it—in some of the younger men. Being descended, generally, from French-Canadian sires and Indian mothers, they united some of the good and not a few of the bad qualities of both, mentally as well as physically—combining the light gay-hearted spirit and full muscular frame of the Canadian with the fierce passions and active habits of the Indian. And this wildness of disposition was not a little fostered by the nature of their usual occupations. They were employed during a great part of the year in

navigating the Hudson's Bay Company's boats, laden with furs and goods, through the labyrinth of rivers and lakes that stud and intersect the whole continent, or they were engaged in pursuit of the bison,* which roam the prairies in vast herds.

They were dressed in the costume of the country: most of them wore light-blue cloth capotes, girded tightly round them by scarlet or crimson worsted belts. Some of them had blue and others scarlet cloth leggings, ornamented more or less with stained porcupine quills, coloured silk, or variegated beads; while some might be seen clad in the leathern coats of winter—deer-skin dressed like chamois leather, fringed all round with little tails, and ornamented much in the same way as those already described. The heavy winter moccasins and duffel socks, which give to their feet the appearance of being afflicted with gout, were now replaced by moccasins of a lighter and more elegant character, having no socks below, and fitting tightly to the feet like gloves. Some wore hats similar to those made of silk or beaver which are worn by ourselves in Britain, but so bedizened with scarlet cock-tail feathers, and silver cords and tassels, as to leave the original form of the head-dress a matter of great uncertainty. These hats, however, are only used on high occasions, and chiefly by the fops. Most of the men wore coarse blue cloth caps with peaks, and not a few discarded head-pieces altogether, under the impression, apparently, that nature had supplied a covering which was in itself sufficient. These costumes varied not only in character but in quality, according to the circumstances of the wearer; some being highly ornamented and mended—evincing the felicity of the owner in the possession of a good wife—while others were soiled and torn, or but slightly ornamented. The voyageurs were collected, as we have said, in groups. Here stood a dozen of the youngest—consequently the most noisy and showily dressed—laughing loudly, gesticulating violently, and bragging tremendously. Near to them were collected a number of sterner spirits—men of middle age, with all the energy, and muscle, and bone of youth, but without its swaggering hilarity; men whose powers and nerves had been tried over and over again amid the stirring scenes of a voyageur's life; men whose heads were cool, and eyes sharp, and hands ready and powerful, in the mad whirl of boiling rapids, in the sudden attack of wild beast and hostile man, or in the unexpected approach of any danger; men who, having been well tried, needed not to boast, and who, having carried off triumphantly their respective brides many years ago, needed not to decorate their persons with the absurd finery that characterized their younger brethren. They were comparatively few in number, but they composed a sterling band, of which every man was a hero. Among them were those who occupied the high positions of bowman and steersman, and when we tell the reader that on these two men frequently hangs the safety of a boat, with all its crew and lading, it will be easily understood how needful it is that they should be men of iron nerve and strength of mind.

Boat-travelling in those regions is conducted in a way that would astonish most people who dwell in the civilized quarters of the globe. The country being intersected in all directions by great lakes and

* These animals are always called buffaloes by American hunters and fur-traders.

rivers, these have been adopted as the most convenient highways along which to convey the supplies and bring back the furs from outposts. Rivers in America, however, as in other parts of the world, are distinguished by sudden ebullitions and turbulent points of character, in the shape of rapids, falls, and cataracts, up and down which neither men nor boats can by any possibility go with impunity; consequently, on arriving at such obstructions, the cargoes are carried overland to navigable water above or below the falls (as the case may be), then the boats are dragged over and launched, again reloaded, and the travellers proceed. This operation is called "making a portage;" and as these portages vary from twelve yards to twelve miles in length, it may be readily conceived that a voyager's life is not an easy one by any means.

This, however, is only one of his difficulties. Rapids occur which are not so dangerous as to make a "portage" necessary, but are sufficiently turbulent to render the descent of them perilous. In such cases, the boats, being lightened of part of their cargo, are *run* down, and frequently they descend with full cargoes and crews. It is then that the whole management of each boat devolves upon its bowman and steersman. The rest of the crew, or *middlemen* as they are called, merely sit still and look on, or give a stroke with their oars if required; while the steersman, with powerful sweeps of his heavy oar, directs the flying boat as it bounds from surge to surge like a thing of life; and the bowman stands erect in front to assist in directing his comrade at the stern, having a strong and long pole in his hands, with which, ever and anon, he violently forces the boat's head away from sunken rocks, against which it might otherwise strike and be stove in, capsized, or seriously damaged.

Besides the groups already enumerated, there were one or two others, composed of grave, elderly men, whose wrinkled brows, gray hairs, slow quiet step, showed that the strength of their days was past; although their upright figures and warm brown complexions gave promise of their living to see many summers still. These were the principal steersmen and old guides—men of renown, to whom the others bowed as oracles or looked up to as fathers; men whose youth and manhood had been spent in roaming the trackless wilderness, and who were, therefore, eminently qualified to guide brigades through the length and breadth of the land; men whose power of threading their way among the perplexing intricacies of the forest had become a second nature, a kind of instinct, that was as sure of attaining its end as the instinct of the feathered tribes, which brings the swallow, after a long absence, with unerring certainty back to its former haunts again in spring.

CHAPTER VII.

The Store.

AT whatever establishment in the fur-traders' dominions you may chance to alight, you will find a particular building which is surrounded by a halo of interest; towards which there seems to be a general leaning on the part of everybody, especially of the Indians; and with which are connected, in the minds of all, the most stirring reminiscences and pleasing associations.

This is the trading-store. It is always recognizable, if natives are in the neighbourhood, by the bevy of red men that cluster round it, awaiting the coming of the store-keeper or the trader with that stoic patience which is peculiar to Indians. It may be further recognized, by a close observer, by the soiled condition of its walls, occasioned by loungers rubbing their backs perpetually against it, and the peculiar dinginess round the key-hole, caused by frequent applications of the key, which renders it conspicuous beyond all its comrades. Here is contained that which makes the red man's life enjoyable; that which causes his heart to leap, and induces him to toil for months and months together in the heat of summer and amid the frost and snow of winter; that which *actually* accomplishes, what music is *said* to achieve, the "soothing of the savage breast:" in short, here are stored up blankets, guns, powder, shot, kettles, axes, and knives; twine for net, vermilion for war-paint, fish-hooks and scalping-knives, capotes, cloth, beads, needles, and a host of miscellaneous articles, much too numerous to mention. Here, also, occur periodical scenes of bustle and excitement, when bands of natives arrive from distant hunting-grounds, laden with rich furs, which are speedily transferred to the Hudson's Bay Company's stores in exchange for the goods aforementioned. And many a tough wrangle has the trader on such occasions with sharp natives, who might have graduated in Billingsgate, so close are they at a bargain. Here, too, voyageurs are supplied with an equivalent for their wages, part in advance, if they desire it (and they generally do desire it), and part at the conclusion of their long and arduous voyages.

It is to one of these stores, reader, that we wish to introduce you now, that you may witness the men of the North brigade receive their advances.

The store at Fort Garry stands on the right of the fort, as you enter by the front gate. Its interior resembles that of the other stores in the country, being only a little larger. A counter encloses a space sufficiently wide to admit a dozen men, and serves to keep back those who are more eager than the rest. Inside this counter, at the time we write of, stood our friend Peter Mactavish, who was the presiding genius of the scene.

"Shut the door now, and lock it," said Peter, in an authoritative tone, after eight or ten young voyageurs had crushed into the space in front of the counter. "I'll not supply you with so much as an ounce of tobacco if you let in another man."

Peter needed not to repeat the command. Three or four stalwart shoulders were applied to the door, which shut with a bang like a cannon shot, and the key was turned.

"Come now, Antoine," began the trader, "we've lots to do, and not much time to do it in, so pray look sharp."

Antoine, however, was not to be urged on so easily. He had been meditating deeply all morning on what he should purchase. Moreover, he had a sweetheart, and of course he had to buy something for her before setting out on his travels. Besides, Antoine was six feet high, and broad shouldered, and well made, with a dark face and glossy black hair; and he entertained a notion that there were one or two points in his costume which required to be carefully rectified, ere he could consider that he had attained to perfection: so he brushed the long hair off his forehead, crossed his arms, and gazed around him.

"Come now, Antoine," said Peter, throwing a green blanket at him ; "I know you want *that* to begin with. What's the use of thinking so long about it, eh ? And *that*, too," he added, throwing him a blue cloth capote. "Anything else ?"

"Oui, oui, monsieur," cried Antoine, as he disengaged himself from the folds of the coat which Peter had thrown over his head. "Tabac, monsieur, tabac !"

"Oh, to be sure," cried Peter. "I might have guessed that *that* was uppermost in your mind. Well, how much will you have ?" Peter began to unwind the fragrant weed off a coil of most appalling size and thickness, which looked like a snake of endless length. "Will that do ?" and he flourished about four feet of the snake before the eyes of the voyageur.

Antoine accepted the quantity, and young Harry Somerville entered the articles against him in a book.

"Anything more, Antoine ?" said the trader. "Ah, some beads and silks, eh ? Oho, Antoine !—By the way, Louis, have you seen Annette lately ?"

Peter turned to another voyageur when he put this question, and the voyageur gave a broad grin as he replied in the affirmative, while Antoine looked a little confused. He did not care much, however, for jesting. So, after getting one or two more articles—not forgetting half-a-dozen clay pipes, and a few yards of gaudy calico, which called forth from Peter a second reference to Annette—he bundled up his goods, and made way for another comrade.

Louis Peltier, one of the principal guides, and a man of importance therefore, now stood forward. He was probably about forty-five years of age ; had a plain, olive-coloured countenance, surrounded by a mass of long jet-black hair, which he inherited, along with a pair of dark, piercing eyes, from his Indian mother ; and a robust, heavy, yet active frame, which bore a strong resemblance to what his Canadian father's had been many years before. His arms, in particular, were of herculean mould, with large swelling veins and strongly-marked muscles. They seemed, in fact, just formed for the purpose of pulling the heavy sweep of an inland boat among strong rapids. His face combined an expression of stern resolution with great good-humour ; and truly his countenance did not belie him, for he was known among his comrades as the most courageous and at the same time the most peaceable man in the settlement. Louis Peltier was singular in possessing the latter quality, for assuredly the half-breeds, whatever other good points they boast, cannot lay claim to very gentle or dove-like dispositions. His gray capote and blue leggings were decorated with no unusual ornaments, and the scarlet belt which encircled his massive figure was the only bit of colour he displayed.

The younger men fell respectfully into the rear as Louis stepped forward and begged pardon for coming so early in the day. "Mais, monsieur," he said, "I have to look after the boats to-day, and get them ready for a start to-morrow."

Peter Mactavish gave Louis a hearty shake of the hand before proceeding to supply his wants, which were simple and moderate, excepting in the article of *tabac*, in the use of which he was *im-moderate* being an inveterate smoker ; so that a considerable portion of the snake had to be uncoiled for his benefit.

"Fond as ever of smoking, Louis?" said Peter Mactavish, as he handed him the coil.

"Oui, monsieur—very fond," answered the guide, smelling the weed. "Ah, this is very good. I must take a good supply this voyage, because I lost the half of my roll last year;" and the guide gave a sigh as he thought of the overwhelming bereavement.

"Lost the half of it, Louis!" said Mactavish. "Why, how was that? You must have lost *more* than half your spirits with it!"

"Ah, oui, I lost *all* my spirits, and my comrade François at the same time!"

"Dear me!" exclaimed the clerk, bustling about the store while the guide continued to talk.

"Oui, monsieur, oui. I lost *him*, and my tabac, and my spirits, and very nearly my life, all in one moment!"

"Why, how came that about?" said Peter, pausing in his work, and laying a handful of pipes on the counter.

"Ah, monsieur, it was very sad (*merci, monsieur, merci*; thirty pipes, if you please), and I thought at the time that I should give up my voyageur life, and remain altogether in the settlement with my old woman. Mais, monsieur, that was not possible. When I spoke of it to my old woman, she called *me* an old woman; and you know, monsieur, that *two* old women never could live together in peace for twelve months under the same roof. So here I am, you see, ready again for the voyage."

The voyageurs, who had drawn round Louis when he alluded to an anecdote which they had often heard before, but were never weary of hearing over again, laughed loudly at this sally, and urged the guide to relate the story to "*monsieur*," who, nothing loath to suspend his operations for a little, leaned his arms on the counter and said,—

"Tell us all about it, Louis; I am anxious to know how you managed to come by so many losses all at one time."

"Bien, monsieur, I shall soon relate it, for the story is very short."

Harry Somerville, who was entering the pipes in Louis's account, had just set down the figures "30" when Louis cleared his throat to begin. Not having the mental fortitude to finish the line, he dropped his pen, sprang off his stool, which he upset in so doing, jumped up, sitting-ways, upon the counter, and gazed with breathless interest into the guide's face as he spoke.

"It was on a cold, wet afternoon," said Louis, "that we were descending the Hill River, at a part of the rapids where there is a sharp bend in the stream, and two or three great rocks that stand up in front of the water, as it plunges over a ledge, as if they were put there a purpose to catch it, and split it up into foam, or to stop the boats and canoes that try to run the rapids, and cut them up into splinters. It was an ugly place, monsieur, I can tell you; and though I've run it again and again, I always hold my breath tighter when we get to the top, and breathe freer when we get to the bottom. Well, there was a chum of mine at the bow, François by name, and a fine fellow he was as I ever came across. He used to sleep with me at night under the same blanket, although it *was* somewhat inconvenient; for being as big as myself and a stone heavier, it was all we could do to make the blanket cover us. However he and I were great friends, and we managed it somehow. Well, he was at the bow when we took the rapids, and a first-rate bowman he made. His pole was twice as

long and twice as thick as any other pole in the boat, and he twisted it about just like a fiddlestick. I remember well the night before we came to the rapids, as he was sitting by the fire, which was blazing up among the pine-branches that overhung us, he said that he wanted a good pole for the rapids next day ; and with that he jumped up, laid hold of an axe, and went back into the woods a bit to get one. When he returned, he brought a young tree on his shoulder, which he began to strip of its branches and bark. 'Louis,' says he, 'this is hot work ; give us a pipe.' So I rummaged about for some tobacco, but found there was none left in my bag ; so I went to my kit and got out my roll, about three fathoms or so, and cutting half of it off, I went to the fire and twisted it round his neck by way of a joke, and he said he'd wear it as a necklace all night—and so he did, too, and forgot to take it off in the morning ; and when we came near the rapids I couldn't get at my bag to stow it away, so says I, 'Francois, you'll have to run with it on, for I can't stop to stow it now.' 'All right,' says he, 'go ahead ;' and just as he said it, we came in sight of the first run, foaming and boiling like a kettle of robbiboo. 'Take care, lads,' I cried, and the next moment we were dashing down towards the bend in the river. As we came near to the shoot, I saw Francois standing up on the gunwale to get a better view of the rocks ahead, and every now and then giving me a signal with his hand how to steer ; suddenly he gave a shout, and plunged his long pole into the water, to fend off from a rock which a swirl in the stream had concealed. For a second or two his pole bent like a willow, and we could feel the heavy boat jerk off a little with the tremendous strain ; but all at once the pole broke off short with a crack, Francois' heels made a flourish in the air, and then he disappeared head foremost into the foaming water, with my tobacco coiled round his neck ! As we flew past the place, one of his arms appeared, and I made a grab at it, and caught him by the sleeve ; but the effort upset myself, and over I went too. Fortunately, however, one of my men caught me by the foot, and held on like a vice ; but the force of the current tore Francois' sleeve out of my grasp, and I was dragged into the boat again just in time to see my comrade's legs and arms going like the sails of a wind-mill, as he rolled over several times and disappeared. Well, we put ashore the moment we got into still water, and then five or six of us started off on foot to look for Francois. After half-an-hour's search, we found him pitched upon a flat rock in the middle of the stream like a bit of drift-wood. We immediately waded out to the rock and brought him ashore, where we lighted a fire, took off all his clothes, and rubbed him till he began to show signs of life again. But you may judge, *mes garçons*, of my misery when I found that the coil of tobacco was gone. It had come off his neck during his struggles and there wasn't a vestige of it left, except a bright red mark on the throat, where it had nearly strangled him. When he began to recover he put his hand up to his neck as if feeling for something, and muttered faintly, 'The tabac.' 'Ah, *morbleu* !' said I, 'you may say that ! Where is it ?' Well, we soon brought him round, but he had swallowed so much water that it damaged his lungs, and we had to leave him at the next post we came to ; and so I lost my friend too."

"Did Francois get better?" said Charley Kennedy, in a voice of great concern.

Charley had entered the store by another door, just as the guide

began his story, and had listened to it unobserved with breathless interest.

"Recover ! Oh oui, monsieur, he soon got well again."

"Oh, I'm so glad," cried Charley.

"But I lost him for that voyage," added the guide ; "and I lost my *tabac* for ever !"

"You must take better care of it this time, Louis," said Peter Mactavish, as he resumed his work.

"That I shall, monsieur," replied Louis, shouldering his goods, and quitting the store, while a short, slim, active little Canadian took his place.

"Now then, Baptiste," said Mactavish, "you want a—"

"Blanket, monsieur."

"Good. And—"

"A *capote*, monsieur !"

"And—"

"An axe—"

"Stop, stop !" shouted Harry Somerville from his desk. "Here's an entry in Louis's account that I can't make out--30 something or other ; what can it have been ?"

"How often," said Mactavish, going up to him with a look of annoyance—"how often have I told you, Mr. Somerville, not to leave an entry half finished on any account !"

"I didn't know that I left it so," said Harry, twisting his features, and scratching his head in great perplexity. "What *can* it have been ?" 30—30—not blankets, eh ?" (Harry was becoming banteringly bitter). "He couldn't have got thirty guns, could he ? or thirty knives, or thirty copper kettles ?"

"Perhaps it was thirty pounds of tea," suggested Charley.

"No doubt it was thirty *pipes*," said Peter Mactavish.

"Oh, that was it !" cried Harry, "that was it ! thirty pipes, to be sure. What an ass I am !"

"And pray what is *that* ?" said Mactavish, pointing sarcastically to an entry in the previous account—*5 yards of superfine Annette* ? Really, Mr. Somerville, I wish you would pay more attention to your work and less to the conversation."

"Oh dear !" cried Harry, becoming almost hysterical under the combined effects of chagrin at making so many mistakes, and suppressed merriment at the idea of selling *Annettes* by the yard. "Oh, dear me—"

Harry could say no more, but stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth and turned away.

"Well, sir," said the offended Peter, "when you have laughed to your entire satisfaction, we will go on with our work, if you please."

"All right," cried Harry, suppressing his feelings with a strong effort ; "what next ?"

Just then a tall, raw-boned man entered the store, and rudely thrusting Baptiste aside, asked if he could get his supplies now.

"No," said Mactavish, sharply ; "you'll take your turn like the rest."

The new-comer was a native of Orkney, a country from which, and the neighbouring islands, the Fur Company almost exclusively recruits its staff of labourers. These men are steady, useful servants, although inclined to be slow and lazy *at first* ; but they soon get used

to the country, and rapidly improve under the example of the active Canadians and half-breeds with whom they associate; some of them are the best servants the Company possess. Hugh Mathison, however, was a very bad specimen of the race, being rough and coarse in his manners, and very lazy withal. Upon receiving the trader's answer, Hugh turned sulkily on his heel and strode towards the door. Now, it happened that Baptiste's bundle lay just behind him, and on turning to leave the place, he tripped over it and stumbled, whereat the voyageurs burst into an ironical laugh (for Hugh was not a favourite).

"Confound your trash!" he cried, giving the little bundle a kick that scattered everything over the floor.

"Crapaud!" said Baptiste, between his set teeth, while his eyes flashed angrily, and he stood up before Hugh with clinched fists, "what mean you by that, eh?"

The big Scotchman held his little opponent in contempt; so that, instead of putting himself on the defensive, he leaned his back against the door, thrust his hands into his pockets, and requested to know "what that was to him."

Baptiste was not a man of many words, and this reply, coupled with the insolent sneer with which it was uttered, caused him to plant a sudden and well-directed blow on the point of Hugh's nose, which flattened it on his face, and brought the back of his head into violent contact with the door.

"Well done!" shouted the men; "bravo, Baptiste! *Regardez le nez, mes enfants!*"

"Hold!" cried Mactavish, vaulting the counter, and intercepting Hugh as he rushed upon his antagonist; "no fighting here, you blackguards! If you want to do *that*, go outside the fort;" and Peter, opening the door, thrust the Orkneyman out.

In the meantime, Baptiste gathered up his goods and left the store, in company with several of his friends, vowing that he would wreak his vengeance on the "gros chien" before the sun should set.

He had not long to wait, however, for just outside the gate he found Hugh, still smarting under the pain and indignity of the blow, and ready to pounce upon him like a cat on a mouse.

Baptiste instantly threw down his bundle, and prepared for battle by discarding his coat.

Every nation has its own peculiar method of fighting, and its own ideas of what is honourable and dishonourable in combat. The English, as every one knows, have particularly stringent rules regarding the part of the body which may or may not be hit with propriety, and count it foul disgrace to strike a man when he is down; although, by some strange perversity of reasoning, they deem it right and fair to *fall* upon him while in this helpless condition, and burst him if possible. The Scotchman has less of the science, and we are half inclined to believe that he would go the length of kicking a fallen opponent; but on this point we are not quite positive. In regard to the style adopted by the half-breeds, however, we have no doubt. They fight *any* way and *every* way, without reference to rules at all; and really, although we may bring ourselves into contempt by admitting the fact, we think they are quite right. No doubt the best course of action is *not* to fight; but if a man does find it *necessary* to do so, surely the wisest plan is to get it over at

once (as the dentist suggested to his timorous patient), and to do it in the most effectual manner.

Be this as it may, Baptiste flew at Hugh, and alighted upon him, not head first, or fist first, or feet first, or *anything* first, but altogether—in a heap as it were; fist, feet, knees, nails, and teeth all taking effect at one and the same time, with a force so irresistible that the next moment they both rolled in the dust together.

For a minute or so they struggled and kicked like a couple of serpents, and then, bounding to their feet again, they began to perform a war-dance round each other, revolving their fists at the same time in, we presume, the most approved fashion. Owing to his bulk and natural laziness, which rendered jumping about like a jack-in-the-box impossible, Hugh Mathison preferred to stand on the defensive; while his lighter opponent, giving way to the natural bent of his mercurial temperament and corporeal predilections, comported himself in a manner that cannot be likened to anything mortal or immortal, human or inhuman, unless it be to an insane cat, whose veins ran wild-fire instead of blood. Or perhaps we might liken him to that ingenious piece of firework called a zigzag cracker, which explodes with unexpected and repeated suddenness, changing its position in a most perplexing manner at every crack. Baptiste, after the first onset, danced backwards with surprising lightness, glaring at his adversary the while, and rapidly revolving his fists as before mentioned; then a terrific yell was heard; his head, arms, and legs became a sort of whirling conglomerate; the spot on which he danced was suddenly vacant, and at the same moment Mathison received a bite, a scratch, a dab on the nose, and a kick on the stomach all at once. Feeling that it was impossible to plant a well-directed blow on such an assailant, he waited for the next onslaught; and the moment he saw the explosive object flying through the air towards him, he met it with a crack of his heavy fist, which, happening to take effect in the middle of the chest, drove it backwards with about as much velocity as it had approached, and poor Baptiste measured his length on the ground.

“Oh pauvre chien!” cried the spectators, “c’est fini!”

“Not yet,” cried Baptiste, as he sprang with a scream to his feet again, and began his dance with redoubled energy, just as if all that had gone before was a mere sketch—a sort of playful rehearsal, as it were, of what was now to follow. At this moment Hugh stumbled over a canoe-paddle, and fell headlong into Baptiste’s arms, as he was in the very act of making one of his violent descents. This unlooked-for occurrence brought them both to a sudden pause, partly from necessity and partly from surprise. Out of this state Baptiste recovered first, and taking advantage of the accident, threw Mathison heavily to the ground. He rose quickly, however, and renewed the fight with freshened vigour.

Just at this moment a passionate growl was heard, and old Mr. Kennedy rushed out of the fort in a towering rage.

Now Mr. Kennedy had no reason whatever for being angry. He was only a visitor at the fort, and so had no concern in the behaviour of those connected with it. He was not even in the Company’s service now, and could not, therefore, lay claim, as one of its officers, to any right to interfere with its men. But Mr. Kennedy never acted much from reason; impulse was generally his guiding-star.

He had, moreover, been an absolute monarch, and a commander of men, for many years past in his capacity of fur-trader. Being, as we have said, a powerful, fiery man, he had ruled very much by means of brute force—a species of suasion, by the way, which is too common among many of the gentlemen (?) in the employment of the Hudson's Bay Company. On hearing, therefore, that the men were fighting in front of the fort, Mr. Kennedy rushed out in a towering rage.

"Oh, you precious blackguards!" he cried, running up to the combatants, while with flashing eyes he gazed first at one and then at the other, as if uncertain on which to launch his ire. "Have you no place in the world to fight but *here*? eh, blackguards?"

"O monsieur," said Baptiste, lowering his hands, and assuming that politeness of demeanour which seems inseparable from French blood, however much mixed with baser fluid, "I was just giving *that* dog a thrashing, monsieur."

"Go!" cried Mr. Kennedy, in a voice of thunder, turning to Hugh, who still stood in a pugilistic attitude, with very little respect in his looks.

Hugh hesitated to obey the order; but Mr. Kennedy continued to advance, grinding his teeth and working his fingers convulsively, as if he longed to lay violent hold of the Orkneyman's swelled nose; so he retreated in his uncertainty, but still with his face to the foe. As has been already said, the Assiniboine River flows within a hundred yards of the gate of Fort Garry. The two men, in their combat, had approached pretty near to the bank, at a place where it descends somewhat precipitately into the stream. It was towards this bank that Hugh Mathison was now retreating, crab fashion, followed by Mr. Kennedy, and both of them so taken up with each other that neither perceived the fact until Hugh's heel struck against a stone just at the moment that Mr. Kennedy raised his clenched fist in a threatening attitude. The effect of this combination was to pitch the poor man head over heels down the bank, into a row of willow bushes, through which, as he rolled with great speed, he went with a loud crash, and shot head first, like a startled alligator, into the water, amid a roar of laughter from his comrades and the people belonging to the fort; most of whom, attracted by the fight, were now assembled on the banks of the river.

Mr. Kennedy's wrath vanished immediately, and he joined in the laughter; but his face instantly changed when he beheld Hugh spluttering in deep water, and heard some one say that he could not swim.

"What! can't swim?" he exclaimed, running down the bank to the edge of the water. Baptiste was before him, however. In a moment he plunged in up to the neck, stretched forth his arm, grasped Hugh by the hair, and dragged him to the land.

CHAPTER VIII.

Farewell to Kate—Departure of the brigade—Charley becomes a voyageur.

ON the following day at noon, the spot on which the late combat had taken place became the theatre of a stirring and animated scene. Fort Garry, and the space between it and the river, swarmed with voyageurs, dressed in their cleanest, newest, and most brilliant

costume. The large boats for the north, six in number, lay moored to the river's bank, laden with bales of furs, and ready to start on their long voyage. Young men, who had never been on the road before, stood with animated looks watching the operations of the guides as they passed critical examination upon their boats, overhauled the oars to see that they were in good condition, or with crooked knives (a species of instrument in the use of which voyageurs and natives are very expert) polished off the top of a mast, the blade of an oar, or the handle of a tiller. Old men, who had passed their lives in similar occupations, looked on in silence—some standing with their heads bent on their bosoms, and an expression of sadness about their faces as if the scene recalled some mournful event of their early life, or possibly reminded them of wild, joyous scenes of other days, when the blood coursed warmly in their young veins, and the strong muscles sprang lightly to obey their will; when the work they had to do was hard, and the sleep that followed it was sound—scenes and days that were now gone by for ever. Others reclined against the wooden fence, their arms crossed, their thin white hair waving gently in the breeze, and a kind smile playing on their sunburned faces, as they observed the swagger and coxcombry of the younger men, or watched the gambols of several dark-eyed little children—embryo buffalo-hunters and voyageurs—whose mothers had brought them to the fort to get a last kiss from papa, and witness the departure of the boats.

Several tender scenes were going on in out-of-the-way places—in angles of the walls and bastions, or behind the gates—between youthful couples about to be separated for a season. Interesting scenes these of pathos and pleasantry—a combination of soft glances and affectionate, fervent assurances; alternate embraces (that were *apparently* received with reluctance, but *actually* with delight), and proffers of pieces of calico and beads and other trinkets (received both *apparently* and *actually* with extreme satisfaction) as souvenirs of happy days that were past, and pledges of unalterable constancy and bright hopes in days that were yet to come.

A little apart from the others, a youth and a girl might be seen sauntering slowly towards the copse beyond the stable. These were Charley Kennedy and his sister Kate, who had retired from the bustling scene to take a last short walk together, ere they separated, it might be for years, perhaps for ever! Charley held Kate's hand, while her sweet little head rested on his shoulder.

"O Charley, Charley, my own dear, darling Charley, I'm quite miserable, and you ought not to go away; it's very wrong, and I don't mind a bit what you say, I shall die if you leave me!" And Kate pressed him tightly to her heart, and sobbed in the depth of her woe.

"Now, Kate, my darling, don't go on so! You know I can't help it—"

"I *don't* know," cried Kate interrupting him, and speaking vehemently—"I don't know, and I don't believe, and I don't care for anything at all; it's very hard-hearted of you, and wrong, and not right, and I'm just quite wretched!"

Poor Kate was undoubtedly speaking the absolute truth; for a more disconsolate and wretched look of woe-begone misery was never seen on so sweet and tender and lovable a little face before. Her blue swam in two lakes of pure crystal, that overflowed continually; her

mouth, which was usually round, had become an elongated oval ; and her nut-brown hair fell in dishevelled masses over her soft cheeks.

"O Charley," she continued, "why *won't* you stay?"

"Listen to me, dearest Kate," said Charley, in a very husky voice. "It's too late to draw back now, even if I wished to do so ; and you don't consider, darling, that I'll be back again soon. Besides, I'm a man now, Kate, and I must make my own bread. Who ever heard of a man being supported by his old father?"

"Well, but you can do that here."

"Now, don't interrupt me, Kate," said Charley, kissing her forehead ; "I'm quite satisfied with *two short* legs, and have no desire whatever to make my bread on the top of *three long* ones. Besides you know I can write to you—"

"But you won't ; you'll forget."

"No, indeed, I will not. I'll write you long letters about all that I see and do ; and you shall write long letters to me about—"

"Stop, Charley," cried Kate ; "I won't listen to you. I hate to think of it."

And her tears burst forth again with fresh violence. This time Charley's heart sank too. The lump in his throat all but choked him ; so he was fain to lay his head upon Kate's heaving bosom, and weep along with her.

For a few minutes they remained silent, when a slight rustling in the bushes was heard. In another moment a tall, broad-shouldered, gentlemanly man, dressed in black, stood before them. Charley and Kate, on seeing this personage, arose, and wiping the tears from their eyes, gave a sad smile as they shook hands with their clergyman.

"My poor children," said Mr. Addison, affectionately, "I know well why your hearts are sad. May God bless and comfort you ! I saw you enter the wood, and came to bid you farewell, Charley, my dear boy, as I shall not have another opportunity of doing so."

"O dear Mr. Addison," cried Kate, grasping his hand in both of hers, and gazing imploringly up at him through a perfect wilderness of ringlets and tears, "do prevail upon Charley to stay at home ; please do !"

Mr. Addison could scarcely help smiling at the poor girl's extreme earnestness.

"I fear, my sweet child, that it is too late now to attempt to dissuade Charley. Besides, he goes with the consent of his father ; and I am inclined to think that a change of life for a *short* time may do him good. Come, Kate, cheer up ! Charley will return to us again ere long, improved, I trust, both physically and mentally."

Kate did *not* cheer up, but she dried her eyes, and endeavoured to look more composed ; while Mr. Addison took Charley by the hand, and, as they walked slowly through the wood, gave him much earnest advice and counsel.

The clergyman's manner was peculiar. With a large, warm, generous heart, he possessed an enthusiastic nature, a quick, brusque manner, and a loud voice, which, when his spirit was influenced by the strong emotions of pity or anxiety for the souls of his flock, sunk into a deep soft bass of the most thrilling earnestness. He belonged to the Church of England, but conducted service very much in the Presbyterian form, as being more suited to his mixed congregation. After a long conversation with Charley, he concluded by saying,—

"I do not care to say much to you about being kind and obliging to all whom you may meet with during your travels, nor about the dangers to which you will be exposed by being thrown into the company of wild and reckless, perhaps very wicked, men. There is but *one* incentive to every good, and *one* safeguard against all evil, my boy, and that is the love of God. You may perhaps forget much that I have said to you ; but remember this, Charley, if you would be happy in this world, and have a good hope for the next, centre your heart's affection on our blessed Lord Jesus Christ ; for believe me, boy, *his* heart's affection is centred upon you."

As Mr. Addison spoke, a loud hallo from Mr Kennedy apprised them that their time was exhausted, and that the boats were ready to start. Charley sprang towards Kate, locked her in a long, passionate embrace, and then, forgetting Mr. Addison altogether in his haste, ran out of the wood, and hastened towards the scene of departure.

"Good-bye, Charley !" cried Harry Somerville, running up to his friend and giving him a warm grasp of the hand. "Don't forget me, Charley. I wish I were going with you, with all my heart ; but I'm an unlucky dog. Good-bye." The senior clerk and Peter Mactavish had also a kindly word and a cheerful farewell for him as he hurried past.

"Good-bye, Charley, my lad !" said old Mr. Kennedy, in an *excessively* loud voice, as if by such means he intended to crush back some unusual but very powerful feelings that had a peculiar influence on a certain lump in his throat. "Good-bye, my lad ; don't forget to write to your old— Hang it !" said the old man, brushing his coat-sleeve somewhat violently across his eyes, and turning abruptly round as Charley left him and sprang into the boat—"I say, Grant, I—I—What are you staring at, eh ?" The latter part of his speech was addressed in an angry tone, to an innocent voyageur, who happened accidentally to confront him at the moment.

"Come along, Kennedy," said Mr. Grant, interposing, and grasping his excited friend by the arm—"come with me."

"Ah, to be sure!—yes," said he, looking over his shoulder and waving a last adieu to Charley. "Good-bye, God bless you, my dear boy!—I say, Grant, come along ; quick, man, and let's have a pipe—yes, let's have a pipe." Mr. Kennedy, essaying once more to crush back his rebellious feelings, strode rapidly up the bank, and entering the house, sought to overwhelm his sorrow in smoke : in which attempt he failed.

CHAPTER IX.

The voyage—The encampment—A surprise.

It was a fine sight to see the boats depart for the north. It was a thrilling, heart-stirring sight to behold these picturesque athletic men, on receiving the word of command from their guides, spring lightly into the long, heavy boats ; to see them let the oars fall into the water with a loud splash, and then, taking their seats, give way with a will, knowing that the eyes of friends and sweethearts and rivals were bent earnestly upon them. It was a splendid sight to see boat after boat shoot out from the landing-place, and cut through the calm bosom of the river, as the men bent their sturdy backs,

until the thick oars creaked and groaned on the gunwales and flashed in the stream, more and more vigorously at each successive stroke, until their friends on the bank, who were anxious to see the last of them, had to run faster and faster in order to keep up with them, as the rowers warmed at the work, and made the water gurgle at the bows—their bright blue and scarlet and white trappings reflected in the dark waters in broken masses of colour, streaked with long lines of shining ripples, as if they floated on a lake of liquid rainbows. And it was a glorious thing to hear the wild, plaintive song, led by one clear, sonorous voice, that rang out full and strong in the still air, while at the close of every two lines the whole brigade burst into a loud, enthusiastic chorus, that rolled far and wide over the smooth waters—telling of their approach to settlers beyond the reach of vision in advance, and floating faintly back, a last farewell, to the listening ears of fathers, mothers, wives, and sisters left behind. And it was interesting to observe how, as the rushing boats sped onwards past the cottages on shore, groups of men and women and children stood before the open doors and waved adieu, while ever and anon a solitary voice rang louder than the others in the chorus, and a pair of dark eyes grew brighter as a voyageur swept past his home, and recognized his little ones screaming farewell, and seeking to attract their *sire's* attention by tossing their chubby arms or flourishing round their heads the bright vermilion blades of canoe paddles. It was interesting, too, to hear the men shout as they ran a small rapid which occurs about the lower part of the settlement, and dashed in full career up to the Lower Fort—which stands about twenty miles down the river from Fort Garry—and then sped onward again with unabated energy, until they passed the Indian settlement, with its scattered wooden buildings and its small church; passed the last cottage on the bank; passed the low swampy land at the river's mouth; and emerged at last, as evening closed, upon the wide, calm, sea-like bosom of Lake Winnipeg.

Charley saw and heard all this during the whole of that long, exciting afternoon, and as he heard and saw it his heart swelled as if it would burst its prison-bars, his voice rang out wildly in the choruses, regardless alike of tune and time, and his spirit boiled within him as he quaffed the first sweet draught of a rover's life—a life in the woods, the wild, free, enchanting woods, where all appeared in *his* eyes bright, and sunny, and green, and beautiful!

As the sun's last rays sank in the west, and the clouds, losing their crimson hue, began gradually to fade into gray, the boats' heads were turned landward. In a few seconds they grounded on a low point covered with small trees and bushes which stretched out into the lake. Here Louis Peltier had resolved to bivouac for the night. "Now then, mes garçons," he exclaimed, leaping ashore, and helping to drag the boat a little way on to the beach, "vite, vite! à terre, à terre!—Take the kettle, Pierre, and let's have supper."

Pierre needed no second bidding. He grasped a large tin kettle and an axe, with which he hurried into a clump of trees. Laying down the kettle, which he had previously filled with water from the lake, he singled out a dead tree, and with three powerful blows of his axe brought it to the ground. A few additional strokes cut it up into logs, varying from three to five feet in length, which he piled together, first placing a small bundle of dry grass and twigs beneath

them, and a few splinters of wood which he cut from off one of the logs. Having accomplished this, Pierre took a flint and steel out of a gaily ornamented pouch which depended from his waist, and which went by the name of a fire-bag in consequence of its containing the implements for procuring that element. It might have been as appropriately named tobacco-bag or smoking-bag, however, seeing that such things had more to do with it, if possible, than fire. Having struck a spark, which he took captive by means of a piece of tinder, he placed it in the centre of a very dry handful of soft grass, and whirled it rapidly round his head, thereby producing a current of air, which blew the spark into a flame; which, when applied, lighted the grass and twigs; and so, in a few minutes, a blazing fire roared up among the trees—spouted volumes of sparks into the air, like a gigantic squib, which made it quite a marvel that all the bushes in the neighbourhood were not burnt up at once—glared out red and fierce upon the rippling water, until it became, as it were, red-hot in the neighbourhood of the boats, and caused the night to become suddenly darker by contrast; the night reciprocating the compliment, as it grew later, by causing the space around the fire to glow brighter and brighter, until it became a brilliant chamber, surrounded by walls of the blackest ebony.

While Pierre was thus engaged there were at least ten voyageurs similarly occupied. Ten steels were made instrumental in creating ten sparks, which were severally captured by ten pieces of tinder, and whirled round by ten lusty arms, until ten flames were produced, and ten fires sprang up and flared wildly on the busy scene that had a few hours before been so calm, so solitary, and so peaceful, bathed in the soft beams of the setting sun.

In less than half-an-hour the several camps were completed, the kettles boiling over the fires, the men smoking in every variety of attitude, and talking loudly. It was a cheerful scene; and so Charley thought as he reclined in his canvas tent, the opening of which faced the fire, and enabled him to see all that was going on.

Pierre was standing over the great kettle, dancing round it, and making sudden plunges with a stick into it, in the desperate effort to stir its boiling contents—desperate, because the fire was very fierce and large, and the flames seemed to take a fiendish pleasure in leaping up suddenly just under Pierre's nose, thereby endangering his beard, or shooting out between his legs and licking round them at most unexpected moments, when the light wind ought to have been blowing them quite in the opposite direction; and then, as he danced round to the other side to avoid them, wheeling about and roaring viciously in his face, until it seemed as if the poor man would be roasted long before the supper was boiled. Indeed, what between the ever-changing and violent flames, the rolling smoke, the steam from the kettle, the showering sparks, and the man's own wild grimaces and violent antics, Pierre seemed to Charley like a raging demon, who danced not only round, but above, and on, and through, and *in* the flames, as if they were his natural element, in which he took special delight.

Quite close to the tent the massive form of Louis the guide lay extended, his back supported by the stump of a tree, his eyes blinking sleepily at the blaze, and his beloved pipe hanging from his lips, while wreaths of smoke encircled his head. Louis's day's

work was done. Few could do a better; and when his work was over, Louis always acted on the belief that his position and his years entitled him to rest, and took things very easy in consequence.

Six of the boat's crew sat in a semicircle beside the guide and fronting the fire, each paying particular attention to his pipe, and talking between the puffs to any one who chose to listen.

Suddenly Pierre vanished into the smoke and flames altogether, whence in another moment he issued, bearing in his hand the large tin kettle, which he deposited triumphantly at the feet of his comrades.

"Now, then," cried Pierre.

It was unnecessary to have said even that much by way of invitation. Voyageurs do not require to have their food pressed upon them after a hard day's work. Indeed, it was as much as they could do to refrain from laying violent hands on the kettle long before their worthy cook considered its contents sufficiently done.

Charley sat in company with Mr. Park—a chief factor, on his way to Norway House. Gibault, one of the men who acted as their servant, had placed a kettle of hot tea before them, which, with several slices of buffalo tongue, a lump of pemmican, and some hard biscuit and butter, formed their evening meal. Indeed, we may add that these viands, during a great part of the voyage, constituted their every meal. In fact, they had no variety in their fare, except a wild duck or two now and then, and a goose when they chanced to shoot one.

Charley sipped a pannikin of tea as he reclined on his blanket, and being somewhat fatigued in consequence of his exertions and excitement during the day, said nothing. Mr. Park for the same reasons, besides being naturally taciturn, was equally mute, so they both enjoyed in silence the spectacle of the men eating their supper. And it *was* a sight worth seeing.

Their food consisted of robbiboo, a compound of flour, pemmican, and water, boiled to the consistency of very thick soup. Though not a species of food that would satisfy the fastidious taste of an epicure, robbiboo is, nevertheless, very wholesome, exceedingly nutritious, and withal palatable. Pemmican, its principal component, is made of buffalo flesh, which fully equals (some think greatly excels) beef. The recipe for making it is as follows:—First, kill your buffalo—a matter of considerable difficulty, by the way, as doing so requires you to travel to the buffalo-grounds, to arm yourself with a gun, and mount a horse, on which you have to gallop, perhaps, several miles over rough ground and among badger-holes at the imminent risk of breaking your neck. Then you have to run up alongside of a buffalo and put a ball through his heart, which, apart from the murderous nature of the action, is a difficult thing to do. But we will suppose that you have killed your buffalo. Then you must skin him; then cut him up, and slice the flesh into layers, which must be dried in the sun. At this stage of the process you have produced a substance which in the fur countries goes by the name of dried meat, and is largely used as an article of food. As its name implies, it is very dry, and it is also very tough, and very undesirable if one can manage to procure anything better. But to proceed. Having thus prepared dried meat, lay a quantity of it on a flat stone, and take another stone with which pound it into shreds. You must then take the

animal's hide, while it is yet new, and make bags of it about two feet and a half long by a foot and a half broad. Into this put the pounded meat loosely. Melt the fat of your buffalo over a fire, and when quite liquid pour it into the bag until full; mix the contents well together; sew the whole up before it cools, and you have a bag of pemmican of about ninety pounds weight. This forms the chief food of the voyageur, in consequence of its being the largest possible quantity of sustenance compressed into the smallest possible space, and in an extremely convenient, portable shape. It will keep fresh for years, and has been much used, in consequence, by the heroes of arctic discovery, in their perilous journeys along the shores of the frozen sea.

The voyageurs used no plates. Men who travel in these countries become independent of many things that are supposed to be necessary here. They sat in a circle round the kettle, each man armed with a large wooden or pewter spoon, with which he ladled the robbiboo down his capacious throat, in a style that not only caused Charley to laugh, but afterwards threw him into a deep reverie on the powers of appetite in general, and the strength of voyageur stomachs in particular.

At first the keen edge of appetite induced the men to eat in silence; but as the contents of the kettle began to get low, their tongues loosened, and at last, when the kettles were emptied and the pipes filled, fresh logs thrown on the fires, and their limbs stretched out around them, the babel of English, French, and Indian that arose was quite overwhelming. The middle-aged men told long stories of what they *had* done; the young men boasted of what they *meant* to do; while the more aged smiled, nodded, smoked their pipes, put in a word or two as occasion offered, and listened. While they conversed the quick ears of one of the men of Charley's camp detected some unusual sound.

"Hist!" said he, turning his head aside slightly, in a listening attitude, while his comrades suddenly ceased their noisy laugh.

"Do ducks travel in canoes hereabouts?" said the man, after a moment's silence; "for, if not, there's some one about to pay us a visit. I would wager my best gun that I hear the stroke of paddles."

"If your ears had been sharper, Françoise, you might have heard them some time ago," said the guide, shaking the ashes out of his pipe and refilling it for the third time.

"Ah, Louis, I do not pretend to such sharp ears as you possess, nor to such sharp wit either. But who do you think can be *en route* so late?"

"That my wit does not enable me to divine," said Louis; "but if you have any faith in the sharpness of your eyes, I would recommend you to go to the beach and see, as the best and shortest way of finding out."

By this time the men had arisen, and were peering out into the gloom in the direction whence the sound came, while one or two sauntered down to the margin of the lake to meet the new-comers.

"Who can it be, I wonder?" said Charley, who had left the tent, and was now standing beside the guide.

"Difficult to say, monsieur. Perhaps Injins, though I thought there were none here just now. But I'm not surprised that we've attracted *something* to us. Livin' creeturs always come nat'rally to the light, and there's plenty fire on the point to-night."

"Rather more than enough," replied Charley, abruptly, as a slight motion of wind sent the flames curling round his head and singed off his eye-lashes. "Why, Louis, it's my firm belief that if I ever get to the end of this journey, I'll not have a hair left on my head."

Louis smiled.

"O monsieur, you will learn to *observe* things before you have been long in the wilderness. If you *will* edge round to leeward of the fire, you can't expect it to respect you."

Just at this moment a loud hurrah rang through the copse, and Harry Somerville sprang over the fire into the arms of Charley, who received him with a hug and a look of unutterable amazement.

"Charley, my boy!"

"Harry Somerville, I declare!"

For at least five minutes Charley could not recover his composure sufficiently to *declare* anything else, but stood with open mouth and eyes, and elevated eyebrows, looking at his young friend, who capered and danced round the fire in a manner that threw the cook's performances in that line quite into the shade, while he continued all in that line quite into the shade, while he continued all the time to shout fragments of sentences that were quite unintelligible to any one. It was evident that Harry was in a state of immense delight at something unknown save to himself, but which, in the course of a few minutes, was revealed to his wondering friends.

"Charley, I'm *going*! hurrah!" and he leaped about in a manner that induced Charley to say he would not only be going but very soon *gone*, if he did not keep further away from the fire.

"Yes, Charley, I'm going with you! I upset the stool, tilted the ink-bottle over the invoice-book, sent the poker almost through the back of the fireplace, and smashed Tom Whyte's best whip on the back of the 'noo 'oss' as I galloped him over the plains for the last time: all for joy, because I'm going with you, Charley, my darling!"

Here Harry suddenly threw his arms round his friend's neck, meditating an embrace. As both boys were rather fond of using their muscles violently, the embrace degenerated into a wrestle, which caused them to threaten complete destruction to the fire as they staggered in front of it, and ended in their tumbling against the tent and nearly breaking its poles and fastenings, to the horror and indignation of Mr. Park, who was smoking his pipe within, quietly waiting till Harry's superabundant glee was over, that he might get an explanation of his unexpected arrival among them.

"Ah, they will be good voyageurs!" cried one of the men, as he looked on at this scene.

"Oui, oui! good boys, active lads," replied the others, laughing. The two boys rose hastily.

"Yes," cried Harry, breathless, but still excited, "I'm going all the way, and a great deal farther. I'm going to hunt buffaloes in the Saskatchewan, and grizzly bears in the—the—in fact everywhere! I'm going down the Mackenzie River—I'm going *mad* I believe;" and Harry gave another caper and another shout, and tossed his cap high into the air. Having been recklessly tossed, it came down into the fire; when it went in it was dark blue, but when Harry dashed into the flames in consternation to save it, it came out of a rich brown colour.

"Now, youngster," said Mr. Park, "when you've done capering I

should like to ask you one or two questions. What brought you here?"

"A canoe," said Harry, inclined to be impudent.

"Oh, and pray for what *purpose* have you come here?"

"These are my credentials," handing him a letter.

Mr. Park opened the note and read.

"Ah! oh! Saskatchewan—hum—yes—outpost—wild boy—just so—keep him at it—ay, fit for nothing else. So," said Mr. Park, folding the paper, "I find that Mr. Grant has sent you to take the place of a young gentleman we expected to pick up at Norway House, but who is required elsewhere; and that he wishes you to see a good deal of rough life—to be made a trader of, in fact. Is that your desire?"

"That's the very ticket!" replied Harry, scarcely able to restrain his delight at the prospect.

"Well, then, you had better get supper and turn in, for you'll have to begin your new life by rising at three o'clock to-morrow morning. Have you got a tent?"

"Yes," said Harry, pointing to his canoe, which had been brought to the fire and turned bottom up by the two Indians to whom it belonged, and who were reclining under its shelter enjoying their pipes, and watching with looks of great gravity the doings of Harry and his friend.

"*That* will return whence it came to-morrow. Have you no other?"

"Oh yes," said Harry, pointing to the overhanging branches of a willow close at hand, "lots more."

Mr. Park smiled grimly, and turning on his heel re-entered the tent and continued his pipe, while Harry flung himself down beside Charley under the bark canoe.

This species of "tent" is, however, by no means a perfect one. An Indian canoe is seldom three feet broad—frequently much narrower—so that it only affords shelter for the body as far down as the waist, leaving the extremities exposed. True, one *may* double up as nearly as possible into half one's length, but this is not a desirable position to maintain throughout an entire night. Sometimes, when the weather is *very* bad, an additional protection is procured by leaning several poles against the bottom of the canoe, on the weather side, in such a way as to slope considerably over the front; and over these are spread pieces of birch bark or branches and moss, so as to form a screen, which is an admirable shelter. But this involves too much time and labour to be adopted during a voyage, and is only done when the travellers are under the necessity of remaining for some time in one place.

The canoe in which Harry arrived was a pretty large one, and looked so comfortable when arranged for the night that Charley resolved to abandon his own tent and Mr. Park's society, and sleep with his friend.

"I'll sleep with you Harry, my boy," said he, after Harry had explained to him in detail the cause of his being sent away from Red River; which was no other than that a young gentleman, as Mr. Park said, who *was* to have gone, had been ordered elsewhere.

"That's right, Charley; spread out our blankets, while I get some supper, like a good fellow." Harry went in search of the kettle while

his friend prepared their bed. First, he examined the ground on which the canoe lay, and found that the two Indians had already taken possession of the only level places under it. "Humph!" he ejaculated, half inclined to rouse them up, but immediately dismissed the idea as unworthy of a voyageur. Besides, Charley was an amiable, unselfish fellow, and would rather have lain on the top of a dozen stumps than have made himself comfortable at the expense of any one else.

He paused a moment to consider. On one side was a hollow "that" (as he soliloquized to himself) "would break the back of a buffalo." On the other side were a dozen little stumps surrounding three very prominent ones, that threatened destruction to the ribs of any one who should venture to lie there. But Charley did not pause to consider long. Seizing his axe, he laid about him vigorously with the head of it, and in a few seconds destroyed all the stumps, which he carefully collected, and, along with some loose moss and twigs, put into the hollow, and so filled it up. Having improved things thus far, he rose and strode out of the circle of the light into the wood. In a few minutes he reappeared, bearing a young spruce fir tree on his shoulder, which with the axe he stripped of its branches. These branches were flat in form, and elastic—admirably adapted for making a bed on; and when Charley spread them out under the canoe in a pile of about four inches in depth by four feet broad and six feet long, the stumps and the hollow were overwhelmed altogether. He then ran to Mr. Park's tent, and fetched thence a small flat bundle covered with oilcloth and tied with a rope. Opening this, he tossed out its contents, which were two large and very thick blankets—one green the other white; a particularly minute feather pillow, a pair of moccasins, a broken comb, and a bit of soap. Then he opened a similar bundle containing Harry's bed, which he likewise tossed out; and then kneeling down, he spread the two white blankets on the top of the branches, the two green blankets above these, and the two pillows at the top, as far under the shelter of the canoe as he could push them. Having completed the whole in a manner that would have done credit to a chambermaid, he continued to sit on his knees, with his hands in his pockets, smiling complacently, and saying, "Capital—first-rate!"

"Here we are, Charley. Have a second supper—do!"

Harry placed the smoking kettle by the head of the bed, and squatting down beside it, began to eat as only a boy *can* eat who has had nothing since breakfast.

Charley attacked the kettle too—as he said, "out of sympathy," although he "wasn't hungry a bit." And really, for a man who was not hungry, and had supped half-an-hour before, the appetite of *sympathy* was wonderfully strong.

But Harry's powers of endurance were now exhausted. He had spent a long day of excessive fatigue and excitement, and having wound it up with a heavy supper, sleep began to assail him with a fell ferocity that nothing could resist. He yawned once or twice, and sat on the bed blinking unmeaningly at the fire, as if he had something to say to it which he could not recollect just then. He nodded violently, much to his own surprise, once or twice, and began to address remarks to the kettle instead of to his friend. "I say, Charley, this won't do. I'm off to bed!" and suiting the action to

the word, he took off his coat and placed it on his pillow. He then removed his moccasins, which were wet, and put on a dry pair ; and this being all that is ever done in the way of preparation before going to bed in the woods, he lay down and pulled the green blankets over him.

Before doing so, however, Harry leaned his head on his hands and prayed. This was the one link left of the chain of habit with which he had left home. Until the period of his departure for the wild scenes of the North-west, Harry had lived in a quiet, happy home in the West Highlands of Scotland, where he had been surrounded by the benign influences of a family the members of which were united by the sweet bonds of Christian love—bonds which were strengthened by the additional tie of amiability of disposition. From childhood he had been accustomed to the routine of a pious and well-regulated household, where the Bible was perused and spoken of with an interest that indicated a genuine hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and where the name of JESUS sounded often and sweetly on the ear. Under such training Harry, though naturally of a wild, volatile disposition, was deeply and irresistibly impressed with a reverence for sacred things, which, now that he was thousands of miles away from his peaceful home, clung to him with the force of old habit and association, despite the jeers of comrades and the evil influences and ungodliness by which he was surrounded. It is true that he was not altogether unhurt by the withering indifference to God that he beheld on all sides. Deep impression is not renewal of heart. But early training in the path of Christian love saved him many a deadly fall. It guarded him from many of the grosser sins into which other boys, who had merely broken away from the restraints of home, too easily fell. It twined round him—as the ivy encircles the oak—with a soft, tender, but powerful grasp, that held him back when he was tempted to dash aside all restraint ; and held him up when, in the weakness of his human nature, he was about to fall. It exerted its benign sway over him in the silence of night, when his thoughts reverted to home, and during his waking hours, when he wandered from scene to scene in the wide wilderness ; and in after years, when sin prevailed, and intercourse with rough men had worn off much of at least the superficial amiability of his character and to some extent blunted the finer feelings of his nature, it clung faintly to him still, in the memory of his mother's gentle look and tender voice, and never forsook him altogether. Home had a blessed and powerful influence on Harry. May God bless such homes, where the ruling power is *love* ! God bless and multiply such homes in the earth ! Were there more of them there would be fewer heart-broken mothers to weep over the memory of the blooming, manly boys they sent away to foreign climes—with trembling hearts but high hopes—and never saw them more. They were vessels launched upon the troubled sea of time, with stout timbers, firm masts and gallant sails—with all that was necessary above and below, from stem to stern, for battling with the billows of adverse fortune, for stemming the tide of opposition, for riding the storms of persecution, or bounding with a press of canvas before the gales of prosperity ; but without the rudder—without the guiding principle that renders the great power of plank and sail and mast available ; *with* which the vessel moves obedient to the owner's will, *without* which it drifts about with every

current, and sails along with every shifting wind that blows. Yes, may the best blessings of prosperity and peace rest on such families, whose bread, cast continually on the waters, returns to them after many days.

After Harry had lain down, Charley, who did not feel inclined for repose, sauntered to the margin of the lake, and sat down upon a rock.

It was a beautiful calm evening. The moon shone faintly through a mass of heavy clouds, casting a pale light on the waters of Lake Winnipeg, which stretched, without a ripple, out to the distant horizon. The great fresh-water lakes of America bear a strong resemblance to the sea. In storms the waves rise mountains high, and break with heavy, sullen roar upon a beach composed in many places of sand and pebbles; while they are so large that one not only looks out to a straight horizon, but may even sail *out of sight of land* altogether.

As Charley sat resting his head on his hand, and listening to the soft hiss that the ripples made upon the beach, he felt all the solemnizing influence that steals irresistibly over the mind as we sit on a still night gazing out upon the moonlit sea. His thoughts were sad; for he thought of Kate, and his mother and father, and the home he was now leaving. He remembered all that he had ever done to injure or annoy the dear ones he was leaving; and it is strange how much alive our consciences become when we are unexpectedly or suddenly removed from those with whom we have lived and held daily intercourse. How bitterly we reproach ourselves for harsh words, unkind actions; and how intensely we long for one word more with them, one fervent embrace, to prove at once that all we have ever said or done was not *meant* ill, and, at any rate, is deeply, sincerely repented of now! As Charley looked up into the starry sky, his mind recurred to the parting words of Mr. Addison. With uplifted hands and a full heart, he prayed that God would bless, for Jesus' sake, the beloved ones in Red River, but especially Kate; for whether he prayed or meditated, Charley's thoughts *always* ended with Kate.

A black cloud passed across the moon, and reminded him that but a few hours of the night remained; so hastening up to the camp again, he lay gently down beside his friend, and drew the green blanket over him.

In the camp all was silent. The men had chosen their several beds according to fancy, under the shadow of a bush or tree. The fires had burned low—so low that it was with difficulty Charley, as he lay could discern the recumbent forms of the men, whose presence was indicated by the deep, soft, regular breathing of tired but healthy constitutions. Sometimes a stray moonbeam shot through the leaves and branches, and cast a ghost-like, flickering light over the scene, which ever and anon was rendered more mysterious by a red flare of the fire as an ember fell, blazed up for an instant, and left all shrouded in greater darkness than before.

At first Charley continued his sad thoughts, staring all the while at the red embers of the expiring fire; but soon his eyes began to blink, and the stumps of trees began to assume the form of voyageurs, and voyageurs to look like stumps of trees. Then a moonbeam darted in, and Mr. Addison stood on the other side of the fire. At this sight Charley started, and Mr. Addison disappeared, while the boy smiled

to think how he had been dreaming while only half asleep. Then Kate appeared, and seemed to smile on him ; but another ember fell, and another red flame sprang up, and put her to flight too. Then a low sigh of wind rustled through the branches, and Charley felt sure that he saw Kate again coming through the woods, singing the low, soft tune that she was so fond of singing, because it was his own favourite air. But soon the air ceased ; the fire faded away ; so did the trees, and the sleeping voyageurs ; Kate last of all dissolved, and Charley sank into a deep, untroubled slumber.

CHAPTER X.

Varieties, vexations, and vicissitudes.

LIFE is checkered—there is no doubt about that ; whatever doubts a man may entertain upon other subjects, he can have none upon this, we feel quite certain. In fact, so true is it that we would not for a moment have drawn the reader's attention to it here, were it not that our experience of life in the backwoods corroborates the truth ; and truth, however well corroborated, is none the worse of getting a little additional testimony now and then in this sceptical generation.

Life is checkered, then, undoubtedly. And life in the backwoods strengthens the proverb, for it is a peculiarly striking and remarkable specimen of life's variegated character.

There is a difference between sailing smoothly along the shores of Lake Winnipeg with favouring breezes, and being tossed on its surging billows by the howling of a nor'-west wind, that threatens destruction to the boat, or forces it to seek shelter on the shore. This difference is one of the checkered scenes of which we write, and one that was experienced by the brigade more than once during its passage across the lake.

Since we are dealing in truisms, it may not, perhaps, be out of place here to say that going to bed at night is not by any means getting up in the morning ; at least so several of our friends found to be the case when the deep sonorous voice of Louis Peltier sounded through the camp on the following morning, just as a very faint, scarcely perceptible, light tinged the eastern sky.

"Lève, lève, lève !" he cried, "lève, lève, mes enfants !"

Some of Louis's *infants* replied to the summons in a way that would have done credit to a harlequin. One or two active little Canadians, on hearing the cry of the awful word *lève*, rose to their feet with a quick bound, as if they had been keeping up an appearance of sleep as a sort of practical joke all night, on purpose to be ready to leap as the first sound fell from the guide's lips. Others lay still, in the same attitude in which they had fallen asleep, having made up their minds, apparently, to lie there in spite of all the guides in the world. Not a few got slowly into the sitting position, their hair dishevelled, their caps awry, their eyes alternately winking very hard and staring awfully in the vain effort to keep open, and their whole physiognomy wearing an expression of blank stupidity that is peculiar to man when engaged in that struggle which occurs each morning as he endeavours to disconnect and shake off the entanglement of nightly dreams and the realities of the breaking day. Throughout the whole camp there was a low muffled sound, as of men moving lazily, with

broken whispers and disjointed sentences uttered in very deep, hoarse tones, mingled with confused, unearthly noises, which, upon consideration, sounded like prolonged yawns. Gradually these sounds increased, for the guide's *lève* is inexorable, and the voyageur's fate inevitable.

"Oh dear!—yei a—a—ow" (yawning); "hang your *lève*!"

"Oui, vraiment—yei a—a—ow—morbleau!"

"Eh, what's that? Oh, misère!"

"Tare an' ages!" (from an Irishman), "an' I had only got to slaape yit! but—yei a—a—ow!"

French and Irish yawns are very similar, the only difference being, that whereas the Frenchman finishes the yawn resignedly, and springs to his legs, the Irishman finishes it with an energetic gasp, as if he were hurling it remonstratively into the face of Fate, turns round again and shuts his eyes doggedly—a piece of bravado which he *knows* is useless and of very short duration.

"Lève! lève! lève! lève! lève! lève! lève! lève! lève! lève!" There was no mistake this time in the tones of Louis's voice. "Embark, embark! vite, vite!"

The subdued sounds of rousing broke into a loud buzz of active preparation, as the men busied themselves in bundling up blankets, carrying down camp-kettles to the lake, launching the boats, kicking up lazy comrades, stumbling over and swearing at fallen trees which were not visible in the cold, uncertain light of the early dawn, searching hopelessly, among a tangled conglomeration of leaves and broken branches and crushed herbage, for lost pipes and missing tobacco-pouches.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Harry Somerville, starting suddenly from his sleeping posture, and unintentionally cramming his elbow into Charley's mouth, "I declare they're all up and nearly ready to start."

"That's no reason," replied Charley, "why you should knock out all my front teeth, is it?"

Just then Mr. Park issued from his tent, dressed and ready to step into his boat. He first gave a glance round the camp to see that all the men were moving, then he looked up through the trees to ascertain the present state, and, if possible, the future prospects of the weather. Having come to a satisfactory conclusion on that head, he drew forth his pipe and began to fill it, when his eye fell on the two boys, who were still sitting up in their lairs, and staring idiotically at the place where the fire had been, as if the white ashes, half-burned logs, and bits of charcoal were a sight of the most novel and interesting character, that filled them with intense amazement.

Mr. Park could scarce forbear smiling.

"Hollo, youngsters, precious voyageurs *you'll* make, to be sure, if this is the way you're going to begin. Don't you see that the things are all aboard, and we'll be ready to start in five minutes, and you sitting there with your neckcloths off?"

Mr. Park gave a slight sneer when he spoke of *neckcloths*, as if he thought, in the first place, that they were quite superfluous portions of attire, and, in the second place, that having once put them on, the taking of them off at night was a piece of effeminacy altogether unworthy of a Nor'-wester.

Charley and Harry needed no second rebuke. It flashed instantly upon them that sleeping comfortably under their blankets when the men were bustling about the camp was extremely inconsistent with

the heroic resolves of the previous day. They sprang up, rolled their blankets in the oilcloths, which they fastened tightly with ropes; tied the neckcloths, held in such contempt by Mr Park, in a twinkling; threw on their coats, and in less than five minutes were ready to embark. They then found that they might have done things more leisurely, as the crews had not yet got all their traps on board; so they began to look around them, and discovered that each had omitted to pack up a blanket.

Very much crestfallen at their stupidity, they proceeded to untie the bundles again, when it became apparent to the eyes of Charley that his friend had put on his capote inside out; which had a peculiarly ragged and grotesque effect. These mistakes were soon rectified, and shouldering their beds, they carried them down to the boat and tossed them in. Meanwhile Mr. Park, who had been watching the movements of the boys with a peculiar smile, that filled them with confusion, went round the different camps to see that nothing was left behind. The men were all in their places with oars ready, and the boats floating on the calm water, a yard or two from shore, with the exception of the guide's boat, the stern of which rested on the sand awaiting Mr. Park.

"Who does this belong to?" shouted that gentleman, holding up a cloth cap, part of which was of a mottled brown and part deep blue.

Harry instantly tore the covering from his head, and discovered that among his numerous mistakes he had put on the head-dress of one of the Indians who had brought him to the camp. To do him justice, the cap was not unlike his own, excepting that it was a little more mottled and dirty in colour, besides being decorated with a gaudy but very much crushed and broken feather.

"You had better change with our friend here, I think," said Mr. Park, grinning from ear to ear, as he tossed the cap to its owner, while Harry handed the other to the Indian, amid the laughter of the crew.

"Never mind, boy," added Mr. Park, in an encouraging tone, "you'll make a voyageur yet.—Now then, lads, give way;" and with a nod to the Indians, who stood on the shore watching their departure, the trader sprang into the boat and took his place beside the two boys.

"Ho! sing, mes garçons," cried the guide, seizing the massive sweep and directing the boat out to sea.

At this part of the lake there occurs a deep bay or inlet, to save rounding which travellers usually strike straight across from point to point, making what is called in voyageur parlance a *traverse*. These traverses are subjects of considerable anxiety and frequently of delay to travellers, being sometimes of considerable extent, varying from four to five, and in such immense seas as Lake Superior to fourteen miles. With boats, indeed, there is little to fear, as the inland craft of the fur-traders can stand a heavy sea, and often ride out a pretty severe storm; but it is far otherwise with the bark canoes that are often used in travelling. These frail crafts can stand very little sea—their frames being made of thin flat slips of wood and sheets of bark, not more than a quarter of an inch thick, which are sewed together with the fibrous roots of the pine (called by the natives *wattape*), and rendered water-tight by means of melted gum. Although light and buoyant, therefore, and extremely useful in a

country where portages are numerous, they require very tender usage ; and when a traverse has to be made, the guides have always a grave consultation, with some of the most sagacious among the men, as to the probability of the wind rising or falling—consultations which are more or less marked by anxiety and tediousness in proportion to the length of the traverse, the state of the weather, and the courage or timidity of the guides.

On the present occasion there was no consultation, as has been already seen. The traverse was a short one, the morning fine, and the boats good. A warm glow began to overspread the horizon, giving promise of a splendid day, as the numerous oars dipped with a splash and a loud hiss in the water, and sent the boats leaping forth upon the white wave.

"Sing, sing !" cried the guide again, and clearing his throat, he began the beautiful quick-tuned canoe-song "Rose Blanche," to which the men chorused with such power of lungs that a family of plovers, which up to that time had stood in mute astonishment on a sandy point, tumbled precipitately into the water, from which they rose with a shrill, inexpressibly wild, plaintive cry, and fled screaming away to a more secure refuge among the reeds and sedges of a swamp. A number of ducks too, awakened by the unwonted sound, shot suddenly out from the concealment of their night's bivouac with erect heads and startled looks, sputtered heavily over the surface of their liquid bed, and rising into the air, flew in a wide circuit, with whistling wings, away from the scene of so much uproar and confusion.

The rough voices of the men grew softer and softer as the two Indians listened to the song of their departing friends, mellowing down and becoming more harmonious and more plaintive as the distance increased, and the boats grew smaller and smaller, until they were lost in the blaze of light that now bathed both water and sky in the eastern horizon, and began rapidly to climb the zenith, while the sweet tones became less and less audible as they floated faintly across the still water, and melted at last into the deep silence of the wilderness.

The two Indians still stood with downcast heads and listening ears, as if they loved the last echo of the dying music, while their grave, statue-like forms added to, rather than distracted from, the solitude of the deserted scene.

CHAPTER XI.

*Charley and Harry begin their sporting career, without much success—
Whisky-john catching.*

THE place in the boats usually allotted to gentlemen in the Company's service while travelling is the stern. Here the lading is so arranged as to form a pretty level hollow, where the flat bundles containing their blankets are placed, and a couch is thus formed that rivals Eastern effeminacy in luxuriance. There are occasions, however, when this couch is converted into a bed, not of thorns exactly, but of corners ; and really it would be hard to say which of the two is the more disagreeable. Should the men be careless in arranging the cargo, the inevitable consequence is that "monsieur" will find

the leg of an iron stove, the sharp edge of a keg, or the corner of a wooden box occupying the place where his ribs should be. So common, however, is this occurrence that the clerks usually superintend the arrangements themselves, and so secure comfort.

On a couch, then, of this kind Charley and Harry now found themselves constrained to sit all morning—sometimes asleep, occasionally awake, and always earnestly desiring that it was time to put ashore for breakfast, as they had now travelled for four hours without halt, except twice for about five minutes, to let the men light their pipes.

"Charley," said Harry Somerville to his friend, who sat beside him, "it strikes me that we are to have no breakfast at all to-day. Here have I been holding my breath and tightening my belt, until I feel much more like a spider or a wasp than a—a—"

"Man, Harry ; out with it at once, don't be afraid," said Charley.

"Well, no, I wasn't going to have said *that* exactly, but I was going to have said a voyageur, only I recollected our doings this morning, and hesitated to take the name until I had won it."

"It's well than you entertain so modest an opinion of yourself," said Mr. Park, who still smoked his pipe as if he were impressed with the idea that to stop for a moment would produce instant death. "I may tell you for your comfort, youngsters, that we shan't breakfast till we reach yonder point."

The shores of Lake Winnipeg are flat and low, and the point indicated by Mr. Park lay directly in the light of the sun, which now shone with such splendour in the cloudless sky, and flashed on the polished water, that it was with difficulty they could look towards the point of land.

"Where is it?" asked Charley, shading his eyes with his hand ; "I cannot make out anything at all."

"Try again, my boy ; there's nothing like practice."

"Ah yes ! I make it out now ; a faint shadow just under the sun. Is that it?"

"Ay, and we'll break our fast *there*."

"I would like very much to break your head *here*," thought Charley, but he did not say it, as, besides being likely to produce unpleasant consequences, he felt that such a speech to an elderly gentleman would be highly improper ; and Charley had *some* respect for gray hairs for their own sake, whether the owner of them was a good man or a goose.

"What shall we do, Harry ? If I had only thought of keeping out a book."

"I know what *I* shall do," said Harry, with a resolute air : "I'll go and shoot !"

"Shoot !" cried Charley. "You don't mean to say that you're going to waste your powder and shot by firing at the clouds ! for, unless you take *them*, I see nothing else here."

"That's because you don't use your eyes," retorted Harry. "Will you just look at yonder rock ahead of us, and tell me what you see."

Charley looked earnestly at the rock, which to a cursory glance seemed as if composed of whiter stone on the top. "Gulls, I declare !" shouted Charley, at the same time jumping up in haste.

Just then one of the gulls, probably a scout sent out to watch the approaching enemy, wheeled in a circle overhead. The two youths

dragged their guns from beneath the thwarts of the boat, and rummaged about in great anxiety for shot-belts and powder-horns. At last they were found; and having loaded, they sat on the edge of the boat, looking out for game with as much—ay, with *more* intense interest than a Blackfoot Indian would have watched for a fat buffalo cow.

"There he goes," said Harry; "take the first shot, Charley."

"Where? where is it?"

"Right ahead. Look out!"

As Harry spoke, a small white gull, with bright-red legs and beak, flew over the boat so close to them that, as the guide remarked, "he could see it wink!" Charley's equanimity, already pretty well disturbed, was entirely upset at the suddenness of the bird's appearance; for he had been gazing intently at the rock when his friend's exclamation drew his attention in time to see the gull within about four feet of his head. With a sudden "Oh!" Charley threw forward his gun, took a short wavering aim, and blew the cock-tail feather out of Baptiste's hat; while the gull sailed tranquilly away, as much as to say, "If *that's* all you can do, there's no need for me to hurry!"

"Confound the boy!" cried Mr. Park. "You'll be the death of some one yet; I'm convinced of that."

"Parbleu! you may say that, *c'est vrai*," remarked the voyageur, with a rueful gaze at his hat, which, besides having its ornamental feather shattered, was sadly cut up about the crown.

The poor lad's face became much redder than the legs or beak of the gull as he sat down in confusion, which he sought to hide by busily reloading his gun; while the men indulged in a somewhat witty and sarcastic criticism of his powers of shooting, remarking, in flattering terms, on the precision of the shot that blew Baptiste's feather into atoms, and declaring that if every shot he fired was as truly aimed, he would certainly be the best in the country.

Baptiste also came in for a share of their repartee. "It serves you right," said the guide, laughing, "for wearing such things on the voyage. You should put away such foppery till you return to the settlement, where there are *girls* to admire you." (Baptiste had continued to wear the tall hat, ornamented with gold cords and tassels, with which he had left Red River).

"Ah!" cried another, pulling vigorously at his oar, "I fear that Marie won't look at you, now that all your beauty's gone."

"'Tis not quite gone," said a third; "there's all the brim and half a tassel left, besides the wreck of the remainder."

"Oh, I can lend you a few fragments," retorted Baptiste, endeavouring to parry some of the thrusts. "They would improve *you* vastly."

"No, no, friend, gather them up and replace them; they will look more picturesque and becoming now. I believe if you had worn them much longer all the men in the boat would have fallen in love with you."

"By St. Patrick," said Mike Brady, an Irishman who sat at the oar immediately behind the unfortunate Canadian, "there's more than enough o' rubbish scattered over mysilf nor would do to stuff a fither-bed with."

As Mike spoke, he collected the fragments of feathers and ribbons with which the unlucky shot had strewn him, and placed them slyly

on the top of the dilapidated hat, which Baptiste, after clearing away the wreck, had replaced on his head.

"It's very purty," said Mike, as the action was received by the crew with a shout of merriment.

Baptiste was waxing wrathful under this fire, when the general attention was drawn again towards Charley and his friend, who, having now got close to the rock, had quite forgotten their mishap in the excitement of expectation.

This excitement in the shooting of such small game might perhaps surprise our readers, did we not acquaint them with the fact that neither of the boys had, up to that time, enjoyed much opportunity of shooting. It is true that Harry had once or twice borrowed the fowling-piece of the senior clerk, and had sallied forth with a beating heart to pursue the grouse which are found in the belt of woodland skirting the Assiniboine River near to Fort Garry. But these expeditions were of rare occurrence, and they had not sufficed to rub off much of the bounding excitement with which he loaded and fired at anything and everything that came within range of his gun. Charley, on the other hand, had never fired a shot before, except out of an old horse-pistol; having up to this period been engaged at school, except during the holidays, which he always spent in the society of his sister Kate, whose tastes were not such as were likely to induce him to take up a gun, even if he had possessed such a weapon. Just before leaving Red River, his father presented him with his own gun, remarking, as he did so, with a sigh, that *his day* was past now; and adding, that the gun was a good one for shot or ball, and if he (Charley) brought down *half* as much game with it as he (Mr. Kennedy) had brought down in the course of his life, he might consider himself a crack shot undoubtedly.

It was not surprising, therefore, that the two friends went nearly mad with excitement when the whole flock of gulls rose into the air like a white cloud, and sailed in endless circles and gyrations above and around their heads—flying so close at times that they might almost have been caught by the hand. Neither was it surprising that innumerable shots were fired, by both sportsmen, without a single bird being a whit the worse for it, or themselves much the better; the energetic efforts made to hit being rendered abortive by the very eagerness which caused them to miss. And this was the less extraordinary, too, when it is remembered that Harry in his haste loaded several times without shot, and Charley rendered the right barrel of his gun *hors de combat* at last, by ramming down a charge of shot and omitting powder altogether, whereby he snapped and primed, and snapped and primed again, till he grew desperate, and then suspicious of the true cause, which he finally rectified with much difficulty.

Frequently the gulls flew straight over the heads of the youths,—which produced peculiar consequences, as in such cases they took aim while the birds were approaching; but being somewhat slow at taking aim, the gulls were almost perpendicularly above them ere they were ready to shoot, so that they were obliged to fire hastily in *haste*, feeling that they were losing their balance, or give up the chance altogether.

Mr. Park sat grimly in his place all the while, enjoying the scene, and smoking.

"Now then, Charley," said he, "take that fellow."

"Which? where? Oh, if I could only get *one*!" said Charley, looking up eagerly at the screaming birds, at which he had been staring so long, in their varying and crossing flight, that his sight had become hopelessly unsteady.

"There! Look sharp; fire away!"

Bang went Charley's piece, as he spoke, at a gull which flew straight towards him, but so rapidly that it was directly above his head; indeed, he was leaning a little backwards at the moment, which caused him to miss again, while the recoil of the gun brought matters to a climax, by toppling him over into Mr. Park's lap, thereby smashing that gentleman's pipe to atoms. The fall accidentally exploded the second barrel, causing the butt to strike Charley in the pit of his stomach—as if to ram him well home into Mr. Park's open arms—and hitting with a stray shot a gull that was sailing high up in the sky in fancied security. It fell with a fluttering crash into the boat while the men were laughing at the accident.

"Didn't I say so?" cried Mr. Park, wrathfully, as he pitched Charley out of his lap, and spat out the remnants of his broken pipe.

Fortunately for all parties, at this moment the boat approached a spot on which the guide had resolved to land for breakfast; and seeing the unpleasant predicament into which poor Charley had fallen, he assumed the strong tones of command with which guides are frequently gifted, and called out,—

"Ho, ho! à terre! à terre! to land! to land! Breakfast, my boys; breakfast!"—at the same time sweeping the boat's head shoreward, and running into a rocky bay, whose margin was fringed by a growth of small trees. Here, in a few minutes, they were joined by the other boats of the brigade, which had kept within sight of each other nearly the whole morning.

While travelling through the wilds of North America in boats, voyageurs always make a point of landing to breakfast. Dinner is a meal with which they are unacquainted, at least on the voyage, and luncheon is likewise unknown. If a man feels hungry during the day, the pemmican-bag and its contents are there; he may pause in his work at any time, for a minute, to seize the axe and cut of a lump, which he may devour as he best can; but there is no going ashore—no resting for dinner. Two great meals are recognized, and the time allotted to their preparation and consumption held inviolable—breakfast and supper: the first varying between the hours of seven and nine in the morning; the second about sunset, at which time travellers usually encamp for the night. Of the two meals it would be difficult to say which is more agreeable. For our own part, we prefer the former. It is the meal to which a man addresses himself with peculiar gusto, especially if he has been astir three or four hours previously in the open air. It is the time of day, too, when the spirits are freshest and highest, animated by the prospect of the work, the difficulties, the pleasures, or the adventures of the day that has begun; and cheered by that cool, clear *buoyancy* of Nature which belongs exclusively to the happy morning hours, and has led poets in all ages to compare these hours to the first sweet months of spring or the early years of childhood.

Voyageurs, not less than poets, have felt the exhilarating influence of the young day, although they have lacked the power to tell it in

sounding numbers; but where words were wanting, the sparkling eye, the beaming countenance, the light step, and hearty laugh, were more powerful exponents of the feelings within. Poet, and painter too, might have spent a profitable hour on the shores of that great sequestered lake, and as they watched the picturesque groups—clustering round the blazing fires, preparing their morning meal, smoking their pipes, examining and repairing the boats, or sunning their stalwart limbs in wild, careless attitudes upon the greensward—might have found a subject worthy the most brilliant effusions of the pen, or the most graphic touches of the pencil.

An hour sufficed for breakfast. While it was preparing, the two friends sauntered into the forest in search of game, in which they were unsuccessful; in fact, with the exception of the gulls before mentioned, there was not a feather to be seen save, always, one or two whisky-johns.

Whisky-johns are the most impudent, puffy, conceited little birds that exist. Not much larger in reality than sparrows, they nevertheless manage to swell out their feathers to such an extent that they appear to be as large as magpies, which they further resemble in their plumage. Go where you will in the woods of Rupert's Land, the instant that you light a fire two or three whisky-johns come down and sit beside you, on a branch, it may be, or on the ground, and generally so near that you cannot but wonder at their recklessness. There is a species of impudence which seems to be specially attached to little birds. In them it reaches the highest pitch of perfection. A bold, swelling, arrogant effrontery—a sort of stark, staring, self-complacent comfortable, and yet innocent impertinence—which is at once irritating and amusing, aggravating and attractive, and which is exhibited in the greatest intensity in the whisky-john. He will jump down almost under your nose, and seize a fragment of biscuit or pemmican.

He will go right into the pemmican-bag, when you are but a few paces off, and pilfer, as it were at the fountain head. Or if these resources are closed against him, he will sit on a twig, within an inch of your head, and look at you as only a whisky-john *can* look.

"I'll catch one of these rascals," said Harry, as he saw them jump unceremoniously into and out of the pemmican-bag.

Going down to the boat, Harry hid himself under the tarpaulin, leaving a hole open near to the mouth of the bag. He had not remained more than a few minutes in this concealment when one of the birds flew down, and alighted on the edge of the boat. After a glance round to see that all was right, it jumped into the bag. A moment after, Harry, darting his hand through the aperture, grasped him round the neck and secured him. Poor whisky-john screamed and pecked ferociously, while Harry brought him in triumph to his friend; but so unremittingly did the bird scream that its captor was fain at last to let him off, the more especially as the cook came up at the moment and announced that breakfast was ready.

CHAPTER XII.

The storm.

Two days after the events of the last chapter, the brigade was making one of the traverses which have already been noticed as of frequent



Ashore for Breakfast.

occurrence in the great lakes. The morning was calm and sultry. A deep stillness prevailed nature, which tended to produce a corresponding quiescence in the mind, and to fill it with those indescribably solemn feelings that frequently arise before a thunder-storm. Dark, lurid clouds hung overhead in gigantic masses, piled above each other like the battlements of a dark fortress, from whose ragged embrasures the artillery of heaven was about to play.

"Shall we get over in time, Louis?" asked Mr. Park, as he turned to the guide, who sat holding the tiller with a firm grasp; while the men, aware of the necessity of reaching shelter ere the storm burst upon them, were bending to the oars with steady and sustained energy.

"Perhaps," replied Louis, laconically.—"Pull, lads, pull! else you'll have to sleep in wet skins to-night."

A low growl of distant thunder followed the guide's words, and the men pulled with additional energy; while the slow, measured hiss of the water, and clank of oars, as they cut swiftly through the lake's clear surface, alone interrupted the dead silence that ensued.

Charley and his friend conversed in low whispers; for there is a strange power in a thunder-storm, whether raging or about to break, that overawes the heart of man,—as if Nature's God were nearer then than at other times; as if he—whose voice indeed, if listened to, speaks even in the slightest evolution of natural phenomena—were about to tread the visible earth with more than usual majesty, in the vivid glare of the lightning flash, and in the awful crash of thunder.

"I don't know how it is, but I feel more like a coward," said Charley "just before a thunder-storm than I think I should do in the arms of a polar bear. Do you feel queer, Harry?"

"A little," replied Harry, in a low whisper; "and yet I'm not frightened. I can scarcely tell what I feel, but I'm certain it's not fear."

"Well, I don't know," said Charley. "When father's black bull chased Kate and me in the prairies, and almost overtook us as we ran for the fence of the big field, I felt my heart leap to my mouth, and the blood rush to my cheeks, as I turned about and faced him, while Kate climbed the fence; but after she was over, I felt a wild sort of wickedness in me, as if I should like to tantalize and torment him,—and I felt altogether different from what I feel now while I look up at these black clouds. Isn't there something quite awful in them, Harry?"

Ere Harry replied, a bright flash of lightning shot athwart the sky followed by a loud roll of thunder, and in a moment the wind rushed, like a fiend set suddenly free, down upon the boats, tearing up the smooth surface of the water as it flew and cutting it into gleaming white streaks. Fortunately the storm came down behind the boats, so that, after the first wild burst was over, they hoisted a small portion of their lug sails, and scudded rapidly before it.

There was still a considerable portion of the traverse to cross, and the guide cast an anxious glance over his shoulder occasionally, as the dark waves began to rise, and their crests were cut into white foam by the increasing gale. Thunder roared in continued, successive peals, as if the heavens were breaking up, while rain descended in sheets. For a time the crews continued to ply their oars; but as the wind increased, these were rendered superfluous. They were taken in, therefore, and the men sought partial shelter under the tarpaulin;

while Mr. Park and the two boys were covered, excepting their heads by an oilcloth, which was always kept at hand in rainy weather.

"What think you now, Louis?" said Mr. Park, resuming the pipe which the sudden outburst of the storm had caused him to forget. "Have we seen the worst of it?"

Louis replied abruptly in the negative, and in a few seconds shouted loudly, "Look out, lads! here comes a squall. Stand by to let go the sheet there!"

Mike Brady, happening to be near the sheet, seized hold of the rope, and prepared to let go; while the men rose, as if by instinct, and gazed anxiously at the approaching squall, which could be seen in the distance extending along the horizon, like a bar of blackest ink, spotted with flakes of white. The guide sat with compressed lips, and motionless as a statue, guiding the boat as it bounded madly towards the land, which was now not more than half-a-mile distant.

"Let go!" shouted the guide, in a voice that was heard loud and clear above the roar of the elements.

"Ay, ay," replied the Irishman, untwisting the rope instantly, as with a sharp hiss the squall descended on the boat.

At that moment the rope became entangled round one of the oars, and the gale burst with all its fury on the distended sail, burying the prow in the waves, which rushed inboard in a black volume, and in an instant half filled the boat.

"Let go!" roared the guide again, in a voice of thunder; while Mike struggled with awkward energy to disentangle the rope.

As he spoke, an Indian, who during the storm had been sitting beside the mast, gazing at the boiling water with a grave, contemplative aspect, sprang quickly forward, drew his knife, and with two blows (so rapidly delivered that they seemed but one) cut asunder first the sheet and then the halyards, which let the sail blow out and fall flat upon the boat. He was just in time. Another moment and the gushing water, which curled over the bow, would have filled them to the gunwale. As it was, the little vessel was so full of water that she lay like a log, while every toss of the waves sent an additional torrent into her.

"Bail for your lives, lads!" cried Mr. Park, as he sprang forward, and, seizing a tin dish, began energetically to bail out the water. Following his example, the whole crew seized whatever came first to hand in the shape of dish or kettle, and began to bail. Charley and Harry Somerville acted a vigorous part on this occasion—the one with a bark dish (which had been originally made by the natives for the purpose of holding maple sugar), the other with his cap.

For a time it seemed doubtful whether the curling waves should send most water *into* the boat, or the crew should bail most *out* of it. But the latter soon prevailed, and in a few minutes it was so far got under that three of the men were enabled to leave off bailing and reset the sail, while Louis Peltier returned to his post at the helm. At first the boat moved but slowly, owing to the weight of water in her; but as this grew gradually less, she increased her speed and neared the land.

"Well done, Redfeather," said Mr. Park, addressing the Indian as he resumed his seat; "your knife did us good service that time, my fine fellow."

Redfeather, who was the only pure native in the brigade, acknowledged the compliment with a smile.

"Ah, oui," said the guide, whose features had now lost their stern expression. "Them Injins are always ready enough with their knives. It's not the first time my life has been saved by the knife o' a red-skin."

"Humph! bad luck to them," muttered Mike Brady; "it's not the first time that my windpipe has been pretty near spificated by the knives o' the red-skins, the murtherin' varmints!"

As Mike gave vent to this malediction, the boat ran swiftly past a low rocky point, over which the surf was breaking wildly.

"Down with the sail, Mike," cried the guide, at the same time putting the helm hard up. The boat flew round, obedient to the ruling power, made one last plunge as it left the rolling surf behind, and slid gently and smoothly into still water under the lee of the point.

Here, in the snug shelter of a little bay, two of the other boats were found, with their prows already on the beach, and their crews actively employed in landing their goods, opening bales that had received damage from the water, and preparing the encampment; while ever and anon they paused a moment, to watch the various boats as they flew before the gale, and one by one doubled the friendly promontory.

If there is one thing that provokes a voyageur more than another, it is being wind-bound on the shores of a large lake. Rain or sleet, heat or cold, icicles forming on the oars, or a broiling sun glaring in a cloudless sky, the stings of sand-flies, or the sharp probes of a million mosquitoes, he will bear with comparative indifference, but being detained by high wind for two, three, or four days together—lying inactively on shore, when everything else, it may be, is favourable; the sun bright, the sky blue, the air invigorating, and all but the wind propitious—is more than his philosophy can carry him through with equanimity. He grumbles at it; sometimes makes believe to laugh at it; very often, we are sorry to say, swears at it; does his best to sleep through it; but whatever he does, he does with a bad grace, because he's in a bad humour, and can't stand it.

For the next three days this was the fate of our friends. Part of the time it rained, when the whole party slept as much as was possible, and then *endeavoured* to sleep *more* than was possible, under the shelter afforded by the spreading branches of the trees. Part of the time was fair, with occasional gleams of sunshine, when the men turned out to eat and smoke and gamble round the fires; and the two friends sauntered down to a sheltered place on the shore, sunned themselves in a warm nook among the rocks, while they gazed ruefully at the foaming billows, told endless stories of what they had done in time past, and equally endless *prospective* adventures that they earnestly hoped should befall them in time to come.

While they were thus engaged, Redfeather, the Indian who had cut the ropes so opportunely during the storm, walked down to the shore, and sitting down on a rock not far distant, fell apparently into a reverie.

"I like that fellow," said Harry, pointing to the Indian.

"So do I. He's a sharp, active man. Had it not been for him we should have had to swim for it."

"Indeed, had it not been for him I should have had to sink for it," said Harry, with a smile, "for I can't swim."

"Ah, true, I forgot that. I wonder what the red-skin, as the guide calls him, is thinking about," added Charley in a musing tone.

"Of home, perhaps, 'sweet home,'" said Harry, with a sigh. "Do you think much of home, Charley, now that you have left it?"

Charley did not reply for a few seconds. He seemed to muse over the question.

At last he said slowly,—

"Think of home? I think of little else when I am not talking with you, Harry. My dear mother is always in my thoughts, and my poor old father. Home? ay; and darling Kate, too, is at my elbow night and day, with the tears streaming from her eyes, and her ringlets scattered over my shoulder, as I saw her the day we parted, beckoning me back again, or reproaching me for having gone away—God bless her! Yes, I often, very often, think of home, Harry."

Harry made no reply. His friend's words had directed his thoughts to a very different and far-distant scene—to another Kate, and another father and mother, who lived in a glen far away over the waters of the broad Atlantic. He thought of them as they used to be when he was one of the number, a unit in the beloved circle, whose absence would have caused a blank there. He thought of the kind voice that used to read the Word of God, and the tender kiss of his mother as they parted for the night. He thought of the dreary day when he left them all behind, and sailed away, in the midst of strangers, across the wide ocean to a strange land. He thought of them now—*without* him—accustomed to his absence, and forgetful, perhaps, at times that he had once been there. As he thought of all this a tear rolled down his cheek, and when Charley looked up in his face, that tear-drop told plainly that he too thought sometimes of home.

"Let us ask Redfeather to tell us something about the Indians," he said at length, rousing himself. "I have no doubt he has had many adventures in his life. Shall we, Charley?"

"By all means.—Ho, Redfeather! are you trying to stop the wind by looking it out of countenance?"

The Indian rose and walked towards the spot where the boys lay.

"What was Redfeather thinking about?" said Charley, adopting the somewhat pompous style of speech occasionally used by Indians. "Was he thinking of the white swan and his little ones in the prairie; or did he dream of giving his enemies a good licking the next time he meets them?"

"Redfeather has no enemies," replied the Indian. "He was thinking of the great Manito,* who made the wild winds, and the great lakes, and the forest."

"And pray, good Redfeather, what did your thoughts tell you?"

"They told me that men are very weak, and very foolish, and wicked; and that Manito is very good and patient to let them live."

"That is to say," cried Harry, who was surprised and a little nettled to hear what he called the heads of a sermon from a red-skin, "that *you*, being a man, are very weak, and very foolish, and wicked, and that Manito is very good and patient to let *you* live?"

* God.

"Good," said the Indian calmly; "that is what I mean."

"Come, Redfeather," said Charley, laying his hand on the Indian's arm, "sit down beside us, and tell us some of your adventures. I know that you must have had plenty, and it's quite clear that we're not to get away from this place all day, so you've nothing better to do."

The Indian readily assented, and began his story in English.

Redfeather was one of the very few Indians who had acquired the power of speaking the English language. Having been, while a youth, brought much into contact with the fur-traders, and having been induced by them to enter their service for a time, he had picked up enough of English to make himself easily understood. Being engaged at a later period of life as guide to one of the exploring parties sent out by the British Government to discover the famous Northwest Passage, he had learned to read and write, and had become so much accustomed to the habits and occupation of the "pale-faces," that he spent more of his time, in one way or another, with them than in the society of his tribe, which dwelt in the thick woods bordering on one of the great prairies of the interior. He was about thirty years of age; had a tall, thin, but wiry and powerful frame; and was of a mild, retiring disposition. His face wore a habitually grave expression, verging towards melancholy; induced, probably, by the vicissitudes of a wild life (in which he had seen much of the rugged side of nature in men and things) acting upon a sensitive heart and a naturally warm temperament. Redfeather, however, was by no means morose; and when seated along with his Canadian comrades round the camp fire, he listened with evidently genuine interest to their stories, and entered into the spirit of their jests. But he was always an auditor, and rarely took part in their conversations. He was frequently consulted by the guide in matters of difficulty, and it was observed that the "red-skin's" opinion always carried much weight with it, although it was seldom given unless asked for. The men respected him much because he was a hard worker, obliging, and modest—three qualities that insure respect, whether found under a red skin or a white one.

"I shall tell you," he began, in a soft, musing tone, as if he were wandering in memories of the past—"I shall tell you how it was that I came by the name of Redfeather."

"Ah!" interrupted Charley, "I intended to ask you about that; you don't wear one."

"I did once. My father was a great warrior in his tribe," continued the Indian; "and I was but a youth when I got the name."

"My tribe was at war at the time with the Chipewyans, and one of our scouts having come in with the intelligence that a party of our enemies was in the neighbourhood, our warriors armed themselves to go in pursuit of them. I had been out once before with a war-party, but had not been successful, as the enemy's scouts gave notice of our approach in time to enable them to escape. At the time the information was brought to us, the young men of our village were amusing themselves with athletic games, and loud challenges were being given and accepted to wrestle, or race, or swim, in the deep water of the river, which flowed calmly past the green bank on which our wigwams stood. On a bank near to us sat about a dozen of our women—some employed in ornamenting

moccasins with coloured porcupine quills ; others making rogans of bark for maple sugar, or nursing their young infants ; while a few, chiefly the old women, grouped themselves together and kept up an incessant chattering, chiefly with reference to the doings of the young men.

"Apart from these stood three or four of the principal men of our tribe, smoking their pipes, and although apparently engrossed in conversation, still evidently interested in what was going forward on the bank of the river.

"Among the young men assembled there was one of about my own age, who had taken a violent dislike to me because the most beautiful girl in all the village preferred me before him. His name was Misconna. He was a hot-tempered, cruel youth ; and although I endeavoured as much as possible to keep out of his way, he sought every opportunity of picking a quarrel with me. I had just been running a race along with several other youths, and although not the winner, I had kept ahead of Misconna all the distance. He now stood leaning against a tree, burning with rage and disappointment. I was sorry for this, because I bore him no ill-will, and if it had occurred to me at the time, I would have allowed him to pass me, since I was unable to gain the race at any rate.

"*'Dog !'* he said at length, stepping forward and confronting me, *'will you wrestle ?'*

"Just as he approached I had turned round to leave the place. Not wishing to have more to do with him, I pretended not to hear, and made a step or two towards the lodges. *'Dog !'* he cried again, while his eyes flashed fiercely, and he grasped me by the arm, *'will you wrestle, or are you afraid ? Has the brave boy's heart changed into that of a girl ?'*

"*'No, Misconna,'* said I. *'You know that I am not afraid ; but I have no desire to quarrel with you.'*

"*'You lie !'* cried he, with a cold sneer,—*'you are afraid ; and see,'* he added, pointing towards the women with a triumphant smile, *'the dark-eyed girl sees it and believes it too !'*

"I turned to look, and there I saw Wabisca gazing on me with a look of blank amazement. I could see, also, that several of the other women, and some of my companions, shared in her surprise.

"With a burst of anger I turned round. *'No, Misconna,'* said I, *'I am not afraid, as you shall find ;'* and springing upon him, I grasped him round the body. He was nearly, if not quite, as strong a youth as myself ; but I was burning with indignation at the insolence of his conduct before so many of the women, which gave me more than usual energy. For several minutes we swayed to and fro, each endeavouring in vain to bend the other's back ; but we were too well matched for this, and sought to accomplish our purpose by taking advantage of an unguarded movement. At last such a movement occurred. My adversary made a sudden and violent attempt to throw me to the left, hoping that an inequality in the ground would favour his effort. But he was mistaken. I had seen the danger, and was prepared for it, so that the instant he attempted it I threw forward my right leg, and thrust him backwards with all my might. Misconna was quick in his motions. He saw my intention—too late, indeed, to prevent it altogether, but in time to throw back his left foot and stiffen his body till it felt like a block of stone. The effort

was now entirely one of endurance. We stood, each with his muscles strained to the utmost, without the slightest motion. At length I felt my adversary give way a little. Slight though the motion was, it instantly removed all doubt as to who should go down. My heart gave a bound of exultation, and with the energy which such a feeling always inspires, I put forth all my strength, threw him heavily over on his back, and fell upon him.

"A shout of applause from my comrades greeted me as I rose and left the ground; but at the same moment the attention of all was taken from myself and the baffled Misconna by the arrival of the scout, bringing us information that a party of Chipewyans were in the neighbourhood. In a moment all was bustle and preparation. An Indian war-party is soon got ready. Forty of our braves threw off the principal parts of their clothing; painted their faces with stripes of vermilion and charcoal; armed themselves with guns, bows, tomahawks, and scalping-knives, and in a few minutes left the camp in silence, and at a quick pace.

"One or two of the youths who had been playing on the river's bank were permitted to accompany the party and among these were Misconna and myself. As we passed a group of women, assembled to see us depart, I observed the girl who had caused so much jealousy between us. She cast down her eyes as we came up, and as we advanced close to the group she dropped a white feather, as if by accident. Stooping hastily down, I picked it up in passing, and stuck it in an ornamented band that bound my hair. As we hurried on, I heard two or three old hags laugh, and say, with a sneer, 'His hand is as white as the feather: it has never seen blood.' The next moment we were hid in the forest, and pursued our rapid course in dead silence.

"The country through which we passed was varied, extending in broken bits of open prairie, and partly covered with thick wood, yet not so thick as to offer any hindrance to our march. We walked in single file, each treading in his comrade's footsteps, while the band was headed by the scout who had brought the information. The principal chief of our tribe came next, and he was followed by the braves according to their age or influence. Misconna and I brought up the rear. The sun was just sinking as we left the belt of woodland in which our village stood, crossed over a short plain, descended a dark hollow, at the bottom of which the river flowed, and following its course for a considerable distance, turned off to the right and emerged upon a sweep of prairieland. Here the scout halted, and taking the chief and two or three braves aside, entered into earnest consultation with them.

"What they said we could not hear; but as we stood leaning on our guns in the deep shade of the forest, we could observe by their animated gestures that they differed in opinion. We saw that the scout pointed several times to the moon, which was just rising above the tree-tops, and then to the distant horizon; but the chief shook his head, pointed to the woods, and seemed to be much in doubt, while the whole band watched his motions in deep silence but evident interest. At length they appeared to agree. The scout took his place at the head of the line, and we resumed our march, keeping close to the margin of the wood. It was perhaps three hours after this ere we again halted to hold another consultation. This time

their deliberations were shorter. In a few seconds our chief himself took the lead, and turned into the woods, through which he guided us to a small fountain which bubbled up at the root of a birch tree, where there was a smooth green spot of level ground. Here we halted, and prepared to rest for an hour, at the end of which time the moon, which now shone bright and full in the clear sky, would be nearly down, and we could resume our march. We now sat down in a circle, and taking a hasty mouthful of dried meat, stretched ourselves on the ground with our arms beside us, while our chief kept watch, leaning against the birch tree. It seemed as if I had scarcely been asleep five minutes when I felt a light touch on my shoulder. Springing up, I found the whole party already astir, and in a few minutes more we were again hurrying onwards.

"We travelled thus until a faint light in the east told us that the day was at hand, when the scout's steps became more cautious, and he paused to examine the ground frequently. At last we came to a place where the ground sank slightly, and at the distance of a hundred yards rose again, forming a low ridge which was crowned with small bushes. Here we came to a halt, and were told that our enemies were on the other side of that ridge; that they were about twenty in number, all Chipewyan warriors, with the exception of one pale-face—a trapper, and his Indian wife. The scout had learned, while lying like a snake in the grass around their camp, that this man was merely travelling with them on his way to the Rocky Mountains, and that, as they were a war-party, he intended to leave them soon. On hearing this the warriors gave a grim smile, and our chief, directing the scout to fall behind, cautiously led the way to the top of the ridge. On reaching it we saw a valley of great extent, dotted with trees and shrubs, and watered by one of the many rivers that flow into the great Saskatchewan. It was nearly dark, however, and we could only get an indistinct view of the land. Far ahead of us, on the right bank of the stream, and close to its margin, we saw the faint red light of watch-fires; which caused us some surprise, for watch-fires are never lighted by a war-party so near to an enemy's country. So we could only conjecture that they were quite ignorant of our being in that part of the country; which was, indeed, not unlikely, seeing that we have shifted our camp during the summer.

"Our chief now made arrangements for the attack. We were directed to separate and approach individually as near to the camp as was possible without risk of discovery, and then, taking up an advantageous position, to await our chief's signal, which was to be the hooting of an owl. We immediately separated. My course lay along the banks of the stream, and as I strode rapidly along, listening to its low solemn murmur, which sounded clear and distinct in the stillness of a calm summer night, I could not help feeling as if it were reproaching me for the bloody work I was hastening to perform. Then the recollection of what the old woman said of me raised a desperate spirit in my heart. Remembering the white feather in my head, I grasped my gun and quickened my pace. As I neared the camp I went into the woods and climbed a low hillock to look out. I found that it still lay about five hundred yards distant, and that the greater part of the ground between it and the place where I stood was quite flat, and without cover of any kind. I therefore prepared

to creep towards it, although the attempt was likely to be attended with great danger, for Chipewyans have quick ears and sharp eyes. Observing, however, that the river ran close past the camp, I determined to follow its course as before. In a few seconds more I came to a dark narrow gap where the river flowed between broken rocks, overhung by branches, and from which I could obtain a clear view of the camp within fifty yards of me. Examining the priming of my gun, I sat down on a rock to await the chief's signal.

"It was evident, from the careless manner in which the fires were placed, that no enemy was supposed to be near. From my concealment I could plainly distinguish ten or fifteen of the sleeping forms of our enemies, among which the trapper was conspicuous, from his superior bulk, and the reckless way in which his brawny arms were flung on the turf, while his right hand clutched his rifle. I could not but smile as I thought of the proud boldness of the pale-face—lying all exposed to view in the gray light of dawn while an Indian's rifle was so close at hand. One Indian kept watch, but he seemed more than half asleep. I had not sat more than a minute when my observations were interrupted by the cracking of a branch in the bushes near me. Starting up, I was about to bound into the underwood, when a figure sprang down the bank and rapidly approached me. My first impulse was to throw forward my gun, but a glance sufficed to show me that it was a woman.

"'Wah!' I exclaimed, in surprise, as she hurried forward and laid her hand on my shoulder. She was dressed partly in the costume of the Indians, but wore a shawl on her shoulders and a handkerchief on her head that showed she had been in the settlements; and from the lightness of her skin and hair, I judged at once that she was the trapper's wife, of whom I had heard the scout speak.

"'Has the light-hair got a medicine-bag, or does she speak with spirits, that she has found me so easily?'

"The girl looked anxiously up in my face as if to read my thoughts and then said, in a low voice,—

"'No, I neither carry the medicine-bag nor hold palaver with spirits; but I do think the good Manito must have led me here. I wandered into the woods because I could not sleep, and I saw you pass. But tell me,' she added, with still deeper anxiety, 'does the white-feather come alone? Does he approach *friends* during the dark hours with a soft step like a fox?'

"Feeling the necessity of detaining her until my comrades should have time to surround the camp, I said: 'The white-feather hunts far from his lands. He sees Indians whom he does not know, and must approach with a light step. Perhaps they are enemies.'

"'Do Knisteneux hunt at night, prowling in the bed of a stream?' said the girl, still regarding me with a keen glance. 'Speak truth, stranger' (and she started suddenly back); 'in a moment I can alarm the camp with a cry, and if your tongue is forked—But I do not wish to bring enemies upon you, if they are indeed such. I am not one of them. My husband and I travel with them for a time. We do not desire to see blood. God knows,' she added in French, which seemed her native tongue, 'I have seen enough of that already.'

"As her earnest eyes looked into my face a sudden thought occurred to me. 'Go,' said I, hastily, 'tell your husband to leave the camp instantly and meet me here; and see that the Chipewyans do not

observe your departure. Quick ! his life and yours may depend on your speed.'

"The girl instantly comprehended my meaning. In a moment she sprang up the bank ; but as she did so the loud report of a gun was heard, followed by a yell, and the war-whoop of the Knisteneux rent the air as they rushed upon the devoted camp, sending arrows and bullets before them.

"On the instant I sprang after the girl and grasped her by the arm. 'Stay, white-cheek ; it is too late now. You cannot save your husband, but I think he'll save himself. I saw him dive into the bushes like a cariboo. Hide yourself here ; perhaps you may escape.'

"The half-breed girl sank on a fallen tree with a deep groan, and clasped her hands convulsively before her eyes, while I bounded over the tree, intending to join my comrades in pursuing the enemy.

"As I did so a shrill cry arose behind me, and looking back, I beheld the trapper's wife prostrate on the ground, and Misconna standing over her, his spear uplifted, and a fierce frown on his dark face.

"'Hold !' I cried, rushing back and seizing his arm. 'Misconna did not come to kill *women*. She is not our enemy.'

"'Does the young wrestler want *another* wife?' he said, with a wild laugh, at the same time wrenching his arm from my gripe, and driving his spear through the fleshy part of the woman's breast and deep into the ground. A shriek rent the air as he drew it out again to repeat the thrust ; but before he could do so, I struck him with the butt of my gun on the head. Staggering backwards, he fell heavily among the bushes. At this moment a second whoop rang out, and another of our band sprang from the thicket that surrounded us. Seeing no one but myself and the bleeding girl, he gave me a short glance of surprise, as if he wondered why I did not finish the work which he evidently supposed I had begun.

"'Wah !' he exclaimed ; and uttering another yell plunged his spear into the woman's breast, despite my efforts to prevent him—this time with more deadly effect, as the blood spouted from the wound, while she uttered a piercing scream, and twined her arms round my legs as I stood beside her, as if imploring for mercy. Poor girl ! I saw that she was past my help. The wound was evidently mortal. Already the signs of death overspread her features, and I felt that a second blow would be one of mercy ; so that when the Indian stooped and passed his long knife through her heart, I made but a feeble effort to prevent it. Just as the man rose, with the warm blood dripping from his keen blade, the sharp crack of a rifle was heard, and the Indian fell dead at my feet, shot through the forehead, while the trapper bounded into the open space, his massive frame quivering, and his sunburned face distorted with rage and horror. From the other side of the brake six of our band rushed forward and levelled their guns at him. For one moment the trapper paused to cast a glance at the mangled corpse of his wife, as if to make quite sure that she was dead ; and then uttering a howl of despair, he hurled his axe with a giant's force at the Knisteneux, and disappeared over the precipitous bank of the stream.

"So rapid was the action that the volley which immediately succeeded passed harmlessly over his head, while the Indians dashed forward in pursuit. At the same instant I myself was felled to the earth. The axe which the trapper had flung struck a tree in its

flight, and as it glanced off the handle gave me a violent blow in passing. I fell stunned. As I did so my head alighted on the shoulder of the woman, and the last thing I felt, as my wandering senses forsook me, was her still warm blood flowing over my face and neck.

"While this scene was going on, the yells and screams of the warriors in the camp became fainter and fainter as they pursued and fled through the woods. The whole band of Chipewyans was entirely routed, with the exception of four who escaped, and the trapper whose flight I have described; all the rest were slain, and their scalps hung at the belts of the victorious Knisteneux warriors, while only one of our party was killed.

"Not more than a few minutes after receiving the blow that stunned me, I recovered, and rising as hastily as my scattered faculties would permit me, I staggered towards the camp, where I heard the shouts of our men as they collected the arms of their enemies. As I rose, the feather which Wabisca had dropped fell from my brow, and as I picked it up to replace it, I perceived that it was *red*, being entirely covered with the blood of the half-breed girl.

"The place where Misconna had fallen was vacant as I passed, and I found him standing among his comrades round the camp fires, examining the guns and other articles which they had collected. He gave me a short glance of deep hatred as I passed, and turned his head hastily away. A few minutes sufficed to collect the spoils, and so rapidly had everything been done that the light of day was still faint as we silently returned on our track. We marched in the same order as before, Misconna and I bringing up the rear. As we passed near the place where the poor woman had been murdered, I felt a strong desire to return to the spot. I could not very well understand the feeling, but it lay so strong upon me that, when we reached the ridge where we first came in sight of the Chipewyan camp, I fell behind until my companions disappeared in the woods, and then ran swiftly back. Just as I was about to step beyond the circle of bushes that surrounded the spot, I saw that some one was there before me. It was a man, and as he advanced into the open space and the light fell on his face, I saw that it was the trapper. No doubt he had watched us off the ground, and then, when all was safe, returned to bury his wife. I crouched to watch him. Stepping slowly up to the body of his murdered wife, he stood beside it with his arms folded on his breast and quite motionless. His head hung down, for the heart of the white man was heavy, and I could see, as the light increased, that his brows were dark as the thunder-cloud, and the corners of his mouth twitched from a feeling that the Indian scorns to show. My heart is full of sorrow for him now" (Redfeather's voice sank as he spoke); "it was full of sorrow for him even *then*, when I was taught to think that pity for an enemy was unworthy of a brave. The trapper stood gazing very long. His wife was young; he could not leave her yet. At length a deep groan burst from his heart, as the waters of a great river, long held down, swell up in spring and burst the ice at last. Groan followed groan as the trapper still stood and pressed his arms on his broad breast, as if to crush the heart within. At last he slowly knelt beside her, bending more and more over the lifeless form until he lay extended on the ground beside it, and twining his arms round the neck, he drew the cold cheek close to his, and pressed

the blood-covered bosom tighter and tighter, while his form quivered with agony as he gave her a last, long embrace. Oh!" continued Redfeather, while his brow darkened, and his black eye flashed with an expression of fierceness that his young listeners had never seen before, "may the curse—" He paused. "God forgive them! how could they know better?"

"At length the trapper rose hastily. The expression of his brow was still the same, but his mouth was altered. The lips were pressed tightly like those of a brave when led to torture, and there was a fierce activity in his motions as he sprang down the bank and proceeded to dig a hole in the soft earth. For half-an-hour he laboured, shovelling away the earth with a large flat stone; and carrying down the body, he buried it there, under the shadow of a willow. The trapper then shouldered his rifle and hurried away. On reaching the turn of the stream which shuts the little hollow out from view, he halted suddenly, gave one look into the prairie he was henceforth to tread alone, one short glance back, and then, raising both arms in the air, looked up into the sky, while he stretched himself to his full height. Even at that distance I could see the wild glare of his eye and the heaving of his breast. A moment after, and he was gone."

"And did you never see him again?" inquired Harry Somerville eagerly.

"No, I never saw him more. Immediately afterwards I turned to rejoin my companions, whom I soon overtook, and entered our village along with them. I was regarded as a poor warrior, because I brought home no scalps, and ever afterwards I went by the name of *Redfeather* in our tribe."

"But are you still thought a poor warrior?" asked Charley, in some concern, as if he were jealous of the reputation of his new friend.

The Indian smiled. "No," he said: "our village was twice attacked afterwards, and in defending it Redfeather took many scalps. He was made a chief!"

"Ah!" cried Charley, "I'm glad of that. And Wabisca, what came of her? Did Misconna get her?"

"She is my wife," replied Redfeather.

"Your wife! Why I thought I heard the voyageurs call your wife the white swan."

"*Wabisca* is *white* in the language of the Knisteneux. She is beautiful in form, and my comrades call her the white swan."

Redfeather said this with an air of gratified pride. He did not, perhaps, love his wife with more fervour than he would have done had he remained with his tribe; but Redfeather had associated a great deal with the traders, and he had imbibed much of that spirit which prompts "*white men*" to treat their females with deference and respect—a feeling which is very foreign to an Indian's bosom. To do so was, besides, more congenial to his naturally unselfish and affectionate disposition, so that any flattering allusion to his partner was always received by him with immense gratification.

"I'll pay you a visit some day, Redfeather, if I'm sent to any place within fifty miles of your tribe," said Charley, with the air of one who had fully made up his mind.

"And Misconna?" asked Harry.

"Misconna is with his tribe," replied the Indian, and a frown overspread his features as he spoke; "but Redfeather has been following

in the track of his white friends ; he has not seen his nation for many moons."

CHAPTER XIII.

The canoe—Ascending the rapids—The portage—Deer-shooting, and life in the woods.

WE must now beg the patient reader to take a leap with us, not only through space, but also through time. We must pass over the events of the remainder of the journey along the shore of Lake Winnipeg. Unwilling though we are to omit anything in the history of our friends that would be likely to prove interesting, we think it wise not to run the risk of being tedious, or of dwelling too minutely on the details of scenes which recall powerfully the feelings and memories of bygone days to the writer, but may, nevertheless, appear somewhat flat to the reader.

We shall not, therefore, enlarge at present on the arrival of the boats at Norway House, which lies at the north end of the lake, nor on what was said and done by our friends and by several other young comrades whom they found there. We shall not speak of the horror of Harry Somerville, and the extreme disappointment of his friend Charley Kennedy, when the former was told that instead of hunting grizzly bears up the Saskatchewan he was condemned to the desk again at York Fort, the depot on Hudson's Bay,—a low, swampy place near the sea-shore, where the goods for the interior are annually landed and the furs shipped for England, where the greater part of the summer and much of the winter is occupied by the clerks who may be doomed to vegetate there in making up the accounts of what is termed the Northern Department, and where the brigades converge from all the wide-scattered and far-distant outposts, and the *ship* from England—that great event of the year—arrives, keeping the place in a state of constant bustle and effervescence until autumn, when ship and brigades finally depart, leaving the residents (about thirty in number) shut up for eight long, dreary months of winter, with a tenantless wilderness around and behind them, and the wide, cold, frozen sea before. This was among the first of Harry's disappointments. He suffered many afterwards, poor fellow !

Neither shall we accompany Charley up the south branch of the Saskatchewan, where his utmost expectations in the way of hunting were more than realized, and where he became so accustomed to shooting ducks and geese, and bears and buffaloes, that he could not forbear smiling when he chanced to meet with a red-legged gull, and remembered how he and his friend Harry had comported themselves when they first met with these birds on the shores of Lake Winnipeg ! We shall pass over all this, and the summer, autumn, and winter too, and leap at once into the spring of the following year.

On a very bright, cheery morning of that spring, a canoe might have been seen slowly ascending one of the numerous streams which meander through a richly-wooded, fertile country, and mingle their waters with those of the Athabasca River, terminating their united career in a large lake of the same name. The canoe was small—one of the kind used by the natives while engaged in hunting, and capable

of holding only two persons conveniently, with their baggage. To any one unacquainted with the nature or capabilities of a northern Indian canoe, the fragile, bright orange-coloured machine that was battling with the strong current of a rapid must indeed have appeared an unsafe and insignificant craft : but a more careful study of its performances in the rapid, and of the immense quantity of miscellaneous goods and chattels which were, at a later period of the day, disgorged from its interior, would have convinced the beholder that it was in truth the most convenient and serviceable craft that could be devised for the exigencies of such a country.

True, it could only hold two men (it *might* have taken three at a pinch), because men, and women too, are awkward, unyielding baggage, very difficult to stow compactly ; but it is otherwise with tractable goods. The canoe is exceedingly thin, so that no space is taken up or rendered useless by its own structure, and there is no end to the amount of blankets, and furs, and coats, and paddles, and tent-covers, and dogs, and babies, that can be stowed away in its capacious interior. The canoe of which we are now writing contained two persons, whose active figures were thrown alternately into every graceful attitude of manly vigour, as with poles in hand they struggled to force their light craft against the boiling stream. One was a man apparently of about forty-five years of age. He was a square-shouldered, muscular man, and from the ruggedness of his general appearance, the soiled hunting-shirt that was strapped round his waist with a party-coloured worsted belt, the leather leggings, a good deal the worse for wear, together with the quiet, self-possessed glance of his grey eye, the compressed lip and the sunburned brow, it was evident that he was a hunter, and one who had seen rough work in his day. The expression of his face was pleasing, despite a look of habitual severity which sat upon it, and a deep scar which traversed his brow from the right temple to the top of his nose. It was difficult to tell to what country he belonged. His father was a Canadian, his mother a Scotchwoman. He was born in Canada, brought up in one of the Yankee settlements on the Missouri, and had, from a mere youth, spent his life as a hunter in the wilderness. He could speak English, French, or Indian with equal ease and fluency, but it would have been hard for any one to say which of the three was his native tongue. The younger man, who occupied the stern of the canoe, acting the part of steersman, was quite a youth, apparently about seventeen, but tall and stout beyond his years, and deeply sunburned. Indeed were it not for this fact, the unusual quantity of hair that hung in massive curls down his neck, and the voyageur costume, we should have recognized our young friend Charley Kennedy again more easily. Had any doubts remained in our mind, the shout of his merry voice would have scattered them at once.

"Hold hard, Jacques," he cried, as the canoe trembled in the current, "one moment, till I get my pole fixed behind this rock. Now, then, shove ahead. Ah!" he exclaimed, with chagrin, as the pole slipped on the treacherous bottom and the canoe whirled round.

"Mind the rock," cried the bowsman, giving an energetic thrust with his pole, that sent the light bark into an eddy formed by a large rock which rose above the turbulent waters. Here it rested while Jacques and Charley raised themselves on their knees (travellers in small canoes always sit in a kneeling position) to survey the rapid.

"It's too much for us, I fear, Mr. Charles," said Jacques, shading his brow with his horny hand. "I've paddled up it many a time alone, but never saw the water so big as now."

"Humph! we shall have to make a portage then, I presume. Could we not give it one trial more? I think we might make a dash for the tail of that eddy, and then the stream above seems not quite so strong. Do you think so, Jacques?"

Jacques was not the man to check a daring young spirit. His motto through life had ever been, "Never venture, never win"—a sentiment which his intercourse among fur-traders had taught him to embody in the pithy expression, "Never say die;" so that, although quite satisfied that the thing was impossible, he merely replied to his companion's speech by an assenting "Ho," and pushed out again into the stream. An energetic effort enabled them to gain the tail of the eddy spoken of, when Charley's pole snapped across, and falling heavily on the gunwale, he would have upset the little craft, had not Jacques, whose wits were habitually on the *qui vive*, thrown his own weight at the same moment on the opposite side, and counterbalanced Charley's slip. The action saved them a ducking; but the canoe, being left to its own devices for an instant, whirled off again into the stream, and before Charley could seize a paddle to prevent it, they were floating in the still water at the foot of the rapids.

"Now, isn't that a bore?" said Charley, with a comical look of disappointment at his companion.

Jacques laughed.

"It was well to *try*, master. I mind a young clerk who came into these parts the same year as I did, and *he* seldom *tried* anything. He couldn't abide canoes. He didn't want for courage neither; but he had a nat'ral dislike to them, I suppose, that he couldn't help, and never entered one except when he was obliged to do so. Well, one day he wounded a grizzly bear on the banks o' the Saskatchewan (mind the tail o' that rapid, Mr. Charles; we'll land 'tother side o' yon rock). Well, the bear made after him, and he cut stick right away from the river, where there was a canoe hauled up on the bank. He didn't take time to put his rifle abroad, but dropped it on the gravel, crammed the canoe into the water and jumped in, almost driving his feet through it bottom, as he did so, and then plumped down so suddenly, to prevent it capsizing, that he split it right across. By this time the bear was at his heel, and took the water like a duck. The poor clerk, in his hurry, swayed from side to side tryin' to prevent the canoe goin' over. But when he went to one side, he was so unused to it that he went too far, and had to jerk over to the other pretty sharp; and so he got worse and worse, until he heard the bear give a great snort beside him. Then he grabbed the paddle in desperation, but at the first dash he missed his stroke, and over he went. The current was pretty strong at the place, which was lucky for him, for it kept him down a bit, so that the bear didn't observe him for a little; and while it was pokin' away at the canoe, he was carried down stream like a log and stranded on a shallow. Jumping up, he made tracks for the wood, and the bear (which had found out its mistake) after him; so he was obliged at last to take to a tree, where the beast watched him for a day and a night, till his friends, thinking that something must be wrong, sent out to look for him.

(Steady, now, Mr. Charles ; a little more to the right. That's it.) Now, if that young man had only ventured boldly into small canoes when he got the chance, he might have laughed at the grizzly and killed him too."

As Jacques finished, the canoe glided into a quiet bay formed by an eddy of the rapid, where the still water was overhung by dense foliage.

"Is the portage a long one?" asked Charley, as he stepped out on the bank, and helped to unload the canoe.

"About half-a-mile," replied his companion. "We might make it shorter by poling up the last rapid ; but it's stiff work, Mr. Charles, and we'll do the thing quicker and easier at one lift."

The two travellers now proceeded to make a portage. They prepared to carry their canoe and baggage overland, so as to avoid a succession of rapids and waterfalls which intercepted their further progress.

"Now, Jacques, up with it," said Charley, after the loading had been taken out and placed on the grassy bank.

The hunter stooped, and seizing the canoe by its centre bar, lifted it out of the water, placed it on his shoulders, and walked off with it into the woods. This was not accomplished by the man's superior strength. Charley could have done it quite as well ; and, indeed, the strong hunter could have carried a canoe twice the size with perfect ease. Immediately afterward Charley followed with as much of the lading as he could carry, leaving enough on the bank to form another load.

The banks of the river were steep—in some places so much so that Jacques found it a matter of no small difficulty to climb over the broken rocks with the unwieldy canoe on his back ; and more so that the branches interlaced overhead so thickly as to present a strong barrier, through which the canoe had to be forced, at the risk of damaging its delicate bark covering. On reaching the comparatively level land above, however, there was more open space, and the hunter treaded his way among the tree stems more rapidly, making a detour occasionally to avoid a swamp or piece of broken ground ; sometimes descending a deep gorge formed by a small tributary of the stream they were ascending, and which, to an unpractised eye, would have appeared almost impassable, even without the encumbrance of a canoe. But the said canoe never bore Jacques more gallantly or safely over the surges of lake or stream than did he bear *it* through the intricate mazes of the forest ; now dividing down and disappearing altogether in the umbrageous foliage of a dell ; anon reappearing on the other side and scrambling up the bank on all-fours, he and the canoe together looking like some frightful yellow reptile of antediluvian proportions ; and then speeding rapidly forward over a level plain until he reached a sheet of still water above the rapids. Here he deposited his burden on the grass, and halting only for a few seconds to carry a few drops of the clear water to his lips, retraced his steps to bring over the remainder of the baggage. Soon afterwards Charley made his appearance on the spot where the canoe was left, and throwing down his load, seated himself on it and surveyed the prospect. Before him lay a reach of the stream which spread out so widely as to resemble a small lake, in whose clear still bosom were reflected the overhanging foliage of graceful willows,

and here and there the bright stem of a silver birch, whose light-green leaves contrasted well with scattered groups and solitary specimens of the spruce fir. Reeds and sedges grew in the water along the banks, rendering the junction of the land and the stream uncertain and confused. All this and a great deal more Charley noted at a glance; for the hundreds of beautiful and interesting objects in nature that take so long to describe even partially, and are feebly set forth after all even by the most graphic language, flash upon the eye in all their force and beauty, and are drunk in at once in a single glance.

But Charley noted several objects floating on the water which we have not yet mentioned. These were five gray geese feeding among the reeds at a considerable distance off, and all unconscious of the presence of a human foe in their remote domains. The travellers had trusted very much to their guns and nets for food, having only a small quantity of pemmican in reserve, lest these should fail—an event which was not at all likely, as the country through which they passed was teeming with wild-fowl of all kinds, besides deer. These latter, however, were only shot when they came inadvertently within rifle range, as our voyageurs had a definite object in view, and could not afford to devote much of their time to the chase.

During the day previous to that on which we have introduced them to our readers, Charley and his companion had been so much occupied in navigating their frail bark among a succession of rapids, that they had not attended to the replenishing of their larder, so that the geese which now showed themselves were looked upon by Charley with a longing eye. Unfortunately they were feeding on the opposite side of the river, and out of shot. But Charley was a hunter now, and knew how to overcome slight difficulties. He first cut down a pretty large and leafy branch of a tree, and placed it in the bow of the canoe in such a way as to hang down before it and form a perfect screen, through the interstices of which he could see the geese, while they could only see, what was to them no novelty, the branch of a tree floating down the stream. Having gently launched the canoe, Charley was soon close to the unsuspecting birds, from among which he selected one that appeared to be unusually complacent and self-satisfied, concluding at once, with an amount of wisdom that bespoke him a true philosopher, that such *must* as a matter of course be the fattest.

"Bang" went the gun, and immediately the sleek goose turned round upon its back and stretched out its feet towards the sky, waving them once or twice as if bidding adieu to its friends. The others thereupon took to flight, with such a deal of sputter and noise as made it quite apparent that their astonishment was unfeigned. Bang went the gun again, and down fell a second goose.

"Ha!" exclaimed Jacques, throwing down the remainder of the cargo as Charley landed with his booty, "that's well. I was just thinking as I comed across that we should have to take to pemmican to-night."

"Well, Jacques, and if we had, I'm sure an old hunter like you, who have roughed it so often, need not complain," said Charley, smiling.

"As to that, master," replied Jacques, "I've roughed it often enough; and when it does come to a clear fix, I can eat my shoes

without grumblin' as well as any man. But, you see, fresh meat is better than dried meat when it's to be had ; and so I'm glad to see that you've been lucky, Mr. Charles."

"To say truth, so am I ; and these fellows are delightfully plump. But you spoke of eating your shoes, Jacques ; when were you reduced to that direful extremity ?"

Jacques finished reloading the canoe while they conversed, and the two were seated in their places, and quietly but swiftly ascending the stream again, ere the hunter replied.

"You've heard of Sir John Franklin, I s'pose ?" he enquired, after a minute's consideration.

"Yes, often."

"An' p'raps you've heard tell of his first trip of discovery along the shores of the Polar Sea ?"

"Do you refer to the time when he was nearly starved to death, and when poor Hood was shot by the Indian ?"

"The same," said Jacques.

"Oh yes ; I know all about that. Were you with them ?" inquired Charley, in great surprise.

"Why, no—not exactly *on* the trip ; but I was sent in winter with provisions to them—and much need they had of them, poor fellows ! I found them tearing away at some old parchment skins that had lain under the snow all winter, and that an Injin's dog would ha' turned up his nose at—and they don't turn up their snouts at many things, I can tell ye. Well, after we had left all our provisions with them, we started for the fort again, just keepin' as much as would drive off starvation ; for, you see, we thought that surely we would git something on the road. But neither hoof nor feather did we see all the way (I was travellin' with an Injin), and our grub was soon done, though we saved it up, and only took a mouthful or two the last three days. At last it was done, and we was pretty well used up, and the fort two days ahead of us. So says I to my comrade—who had been looking at me for some time as if he thought that a cut off my shoulder wouldn't be a bad thing—says I, 'Nipitabo, I'm afeared the shoes must go for it now,' so with that I pulls out a pair o' deerskin moccasins. 'They looks tender,' said I, trying to be cheerful. 'Wah !' said the Injin ; and then I held them over the fire till they were done black, and Nipitabo ate one, and I ate the tother, with a lump o' snow to wash it down !"

"It must have been rather dry eating," said Charley, laughing.

"Rayther ; but it was better than the Injin's leather breeches, which we took in hand next day. They was *uncommon* tough, and very dirty, havin' been worn about a year and a half. Hows'ever, they kept us up ; an' as we only ate the legs, he had the benefit o' the stump to arrive with at the fort next day."

"What's yon ahead ?" exclaimed Charlie, pausing as he spoke, and shading his eyes with his hand.

"It's uncommon like trees," said Jacques. "It's likely a tree that has been tumbled across the river ; and from its appearance, I think we'll have to cut through it."

"Cut through it !" exclaimed Charley ; "if my sight is worth a gun-flint, we'll have to cut through a dozen trees."

Charley was right. The river ahead of them became rapidly narrower ; and either from the looseness of the surrounding soil, or

the passing of a whirlwind, dozens of trees had been upset, and lay right across the narrow stream in terrible confusion. What made the thing worse was that the banks on either side, which were low and flat, were covered with a dense thicket down to the water's edge, that the idea of making a portage to overcome the barrier seemed altogether hopeless.

"Here's a pretty business, to be sure!" said Charley, in great disgust.

"Never say die, Mister Charles," replied Jacques, taking up the axe from the bottom of the canoe; "it's quite clear that cuttin' through the trees is easier than cuttin' through the bushes, so here goes."

For fully three hours the travellers were engaged in cutting their way up the encumbered stream, during which time they did not advance three miles; and it was evening ere they broke down the last barrier and paddled out into a sheet of clear water again.

"That'll prepare us for the geese, Jacques," said Charley, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow; "there's nothing like warm work for whetting the appetite and making one sleep soundly."

"That's true," replied the hunter, resuming his paddle. "I often wonder how them white-faced fellows in the settlements manage to keep body and soul together—a-sittin', as they do, all day in the house, and a-lyin' all night in a feather bed. For my part, rather than live as they do, I would cut my way up streams like them we've just passed every day and all day, and sleep on top of a flat rock o' nights, under the blue sky, all my life through."

With this decided expression of his sentiments, the stout hunter steered the canoe up alongside of a huge flat rock, as if he were bent on giving a practical illustration of the latter part of his speech then and there.

"We'd better camp now, Mister Charles: there's a portage o' two miles here, and it'll take us till sundown to get the canoe and things over."

"Be it so," said Charley, landing. "Is there a good place at the other end to camp on?"

"First-rate. It's smooth as a blanket on the turf, and a clear spring bubbling at the root of a wide tree that would keep off the rain if it was to come down like water-spouts."

The spot on which the travellers encamped that evening overlooked one of those scenes in which vast extent, and rich, soft variety of natural objects, were united with much that was grand and savage. It filled the mind with the calm satisfaction that is experienced when one gazes on the wide lawns studded with noble trees; the spreading fields of waving grain that mingle with stream and copse, rock and dell, vineyard and garden, of the cultivated lands of civilised men: while it produced that exulting throb of freedom which stirs man's heart to its centre, when he casts a first glance over miles and miles of broad lands that are yet unowned, unclaimed; that yet lie in the unmutilated beauty with which the beneficent Creator originally clothed them—far away from the well-known scenes of man's checkered history; entirely devoid of those ancient monuments of man's power and skill that carry the mind back with feelings of awe to bygone ages, yet stamped with evidences of an antiquity more ancient still, in the wild primeval forests, and the noble trees that have sprouted, and spread, and towered in their strength for centuries

—trees that have fallen at their posts, while others took their place, and rose and fell as they did, like long-lived sentinels whose duty it was to keep perpetual guard over the vast solitudes of the great American Wilderness.

The fire was lighted, and the canoe turned bottom up in front of it under the branches of a spreading tree which stood on an eminence, whence was obtained a bird's-eye view of the noble scene. It was a flat valley, on either side of which rose two ranges of hills, which were clothed to the top with trees of various kinds, the plain of the valley itself being dotted with clumps of wood, among which the fresh green foliage of the plane tree and the silver-stemmed birch were conspicuous, giving an airy lightness to the scene and enhancing the picturesque effect of the dark pines. A small stream could be traced winding out and in among clumps of willows, reflecting their drooping boughs and the more sombre branches of the spruce fir and the straight larch, with which in many places its banks were shaded. Here and there were stretches of clearer ground, where the green herbage of spring gave to it a lawn-like appearance, and the whole magnificent scene was bounded by blue hills that became fainter as they receded from the eye and mingled at last with the horizon. The sun had just set, and a rich glow of red bathed the whole scene, which was further enlivened by flocks of wild-fowls and herds of reindeer.

These last soon drew Charley's attention from the contemplation of the scenery, and observing a deer feeding in an open space, towards which he could approach without coming between it and the wind, he ran for his gun and hurried into the woods, while Jacques busied himself in arranging their blankets under the upturned canoe, and in preparing supper.

Charley discovered, soon after starting, what all hunters discover sooner or later—namely, that appearances are deceitful; for he no sooner reached the foot of the hill than he found, between him and the lawn-like country, an almost impenetrable thicket of underwood. Our young hero, however, was of that disposition which sticks at nothing, and instead of taking time to search for an opening, he took a race and sprang into the middle of it, in hopes of forcing his way through. His hopes were not disappointed. He got through—quite through—and alighted up to the armpits in a swamp, to the infinite consternation of a flock of teal ducks that were slumbering peacefully there with their heads under their wings, and had evidently gone to bed for the night. Fortunately he held his gun above the water and kept his balance, so that he was able to proceed with a dry charge, though with an uncommonly wet skin. Half-an-hour brought Charley within range, and watching patiently until the animal presented his side towards the place of his concealment, he fired and shot it through the heart.

"Well done, Mister Charles," exclaimed Jacques, as the former staggered into the camp with the reindeer on his shoulders. "A fat doe, too."

"Ay," said Charley; but she has cost me a wet skin. So pray, Jacques, rouse up the fire, and let's have supper as soon as you can."

Jacques speedily skinned the deer, cut a couple of steaks from its flank, and placing them on wooden spikes, stuck them up to roast, while his young friend put on a dry shirt, and hung his coat before the blaze. The goose which had been shot earlier in the day was also

plucked, split open, impaled in the same manner as the steaks, and set up to roast. By this time the shadows of night had deepened, and ere long all was shrouded in gloom, except the circle of ruddy light around the camp fire, in the centre of which Jacques and Charley sat, with the canoe at their backs, knives in their hands, and the two spits, on the top of which smoked their ample supper, planted in the ground before them.

One by one the stars went out, until none were visible except the bright, beautiful morning star, as it rose higher and higher in the eastern sky. One by one the owls and the wolves, ill-omened birds and beasts of night, retired to rest in the dark recesses of the forest. Little by little the gray dawn overspread the sky, and paled the lustre of the morning star, until it faded away altogether; and then Jacques awoke with a start, and throwing out his arm, brought it accidentally into violent contact with Charley's nose.

This caused Charley to awake, not only with a start, but also with a roar, which brought them both suddenly into a sitting posture, in which they continued for some time in a state between sleeping and waking, their faces meanwhile expressive of mingled imbecility and extreme surprise. Bursting into a simultaneous laugh, which degenerated into a loud yawn, they sprang up, launched and reloaded their canoe, and resumed their journey.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Indian camp—The new outpost—Charley sent on a mission to the Indians.

IN the councils of the fur-traders, on the spring previous to that about which we are now writing, it had been decided to extend their operations a little in the lands that lie in central America, to the north of the Saskatchewan River; and in furtherance of that object, it had been intimated to the chief trader in charge of the district that an expedition should be set on foot, having for its object the examination of a territory into which they had not yet penetrated, and the establishment of an outpost therein. It was, furthermore, ordered that operations should be commenced at once, and that the choice of men to carry out the end in view was graciously left to the chief trader's well-known sagacity.

Upon receiving this communication, the chief trader selected a gentleman named Mr. Whyte to lead the party; gave him a clerk and five men; provided him with a boat and a large supply of goods necessary for trade, implements requisite for building an establishment, and sent him off with a hearty shake of the hand and a recommendation to "go and prosper."

Charles Kennedy spent part of the previous year at Rocky Mountain House, where he had shown so much energy in conducting the trade, especially what he called the "rough and tumble" part of it, that he was selected as the clerk to accompany Mr. Whyte to his new ground. After proceeding up many rivers, whose waters had seldom borne the craft of white men, and across innumerable lakes, the party reached a spot that presented so inviting an aspect that it was resolved to pitch their tent there for a time, and, if things in the way of trade and provision looked favourable, establish themselves altogether. The place was situated on the margin of a large lake, whose

shores were covered with the most luxuriant verdure, and whose waters teemed with the finest fish, while the air was alive with wild-fowl, and the woods swarming with game. Here Mr. Whyte rested awhile; and having found everything to his satisfaction, he took his axe, selected a green lawn that commanded an extensive view of the lake, and going up to a tall larch, struck the steel into it, and thus put the first touch to an establishment which afterwards went by the name of Stony Creek.

A solitary Indian, whom they had met with on the way to their new home, had informed them that a large band of Knisteneux had lately migrated to a river about four days' journey beyond the lake, at which they halted; and when the new fort was just beginning to spring up, our friend Charley and the interpreter, Jacques Caradoc, were ordered by Mr. Whyte to make a canoe, and then, embarking in it, to proceed to the Indian camp, to inform the natives of their rare good luck in having a band of white men come to settle near their lands to trade with them. The interpreter and Charley soon found birch bark, pine roots for sewing it, and gum for plastering the seams, wherewith they constructed the light machine whose progress we have partly traced in the last chapter, and which, on the following day at sunset, carried them to their journey's end.

From some remarks made by the Indian who gave them information of the camp, Charley gathered that it was the tribe to which Redfeather belonged, and furthermore that Redfeather himself was there at that time; so that it was with feelings of no little interest that he saw the tops of the yellow tents embedded among the green trees, and soon afterwards beheld them and their picturesque owners reflected in the clear river, on whose banks the natives crowded to witness the arrival of the white men.

Upon the greensward, and under the umbrageous shade of the forest trees, the tents were pitched to the number of perhaps eighteen or twenty, and the whole population, of whom very few were absent on the present occasion, might number a hundred—men, women, and children. They were dressed in habiliments formed chiefly of materials procured by themselves in the chase, but ornamented with cloth, beads, and silk thread, which showed that they had had intercourse with the fur-traders before now. The men wore leggings and of deerskin, which reached more than half-way up the thigh, and were fastened to a leathern girdle strapped round the waist. A loose tunic or hunting-shirt of the same material covered the figure from the shoulders almost to the knees, and was confined round the middle by a belt—in some cases of worsted, in others of leather gaily ornamented with quills. Caps of various indescribable shapes, and made chiefly of skin, with the animal's tail left on by way of ornament, covered their heads, and moccasins for the feet completed their costume. These last may be simply described as leather mittens for the feet, without fingers, or rather toes. They were gaudily ornamented, as was almost every portion of costume, with porcupines' quills dyed with brilliant colour, and worked into fanciful and in many cases extremely elegant figures and designs; for North American Indians oftentimes display an amount of taste in the harmonious arrangement of colour that would astonish those who fancy that *education* is absolutely necessary to the just appreciation of the beautiful.

The women attired themselves in leggings and coats differing little from those of the men, except that the latter were longer, the sleeves detached from the body, and fastened on separately ; while on their heads they wore caps, which hung down and covered their backs to the waist. These caps were of the simplest construction, being pieces of cloth cut into an oblong shape, and sewed together at one end. They were, however, richly ornamented with silk-work and beads.

On landing, Charley and Jacques walked up to a tall, good-looking Indian, whom they judged from his demeanour, and the somewhat deferential regard paid to him by the others, to be one of the chief men of the little community.

"Ho ! what cheer ?" said Jacques, taking him by the hand after the manner of the Europeans, and accosting him with the phrase used by the fur-traders to the natives. The Indian returned the compliment in kind, and led the visitors to his tent, where he spread a buffalo robe for them on the ground, and begged them to be seated. A repast of dried meat and reindeer-tongues was then served, to which our friends did ample justice ; while the women and children satisfied their curiosity by peering at them through chinks and holes in the tent. When they had finished, several of the principal men assembled, and the chief who had entertained them made a speech, to the effect that he was much gratified by the honour done to his people by the visit of his white brothers ; and he hoped they would continue long at the camp to enjoy their hospitality ; and that he would be glad to know what had brought them so far into the country of the red men.

During the course of this speech the chief made eloquent illusion to all the good qualities supposed to belong to white men in general, and (he had no doubt) to the two white men before him in particular. He also boasted considerably of the prowess and bravery of his tribe, launched a few sarcastic hits at his enemies, and wound up with a poetical hope that his guests might live for ever in these beautiful plains of bliss, where the sun never sets, and nothing goes wrong anywhere, and everything goes right at all times, and where, especially, the deer are outrageously fat, and always come out on purpose to be shot ! During the course of these remarks his comrades signified their hearty concurrence in his sentiments, by giving vent to sundry low-toned "hums !" and "has !" and "wahs !" and "hos !" according to circumstances. After it was over Jacques rose, and addressing them in their own language, said,—

"My Indian brethren are great. They are brave, and their fame has travelled far. Their deeds are known even as far as where the Great Salt Lake beats on the shore where the sun rises. They are not women, and when their enemies hear the sound of their name they grow pale ; their hearts become like those of the reindeer. My brethren are famous, too, in the use of the snow-shoe, the snare, and the gun. The fur-traders know that they must build large stores when they come into their lands. They bring up much goods, because the young men are active, and require much. The silver fox and the marten are no longer safe when their traps and snares are set. Yes, they are good hunters ; and we have now come to live among you" (Jacques changed his style as he came nearer to the point), "to trade with you, and to save you the trouble of making long journeys with your skins. A few days' distance from your

wigwams we have pitched our tents. Our young men are even now felling the trees to build a house. Our nets are set, our hunters are prowling in the woods, our goods are ready, and my young master and I have come to smoke the pipe of friendship with you, and to invite you to come to trade with us."

Having delivered this oration, Jacques sat down amid deep silence. Other speeches, of a highly satisfactory character, were then made, after which "the house adjourned," and the visitors, opening one of their packages, distributed a variety of presents to the delighted natives.

Several times during the course of these proceedings Charley's eyes wandered among the faces of his entertainers, in the hope of seeing Redfeather among them, but without success; and he began to fear that his friend was not with the tribe.

"I say, Jacques," he said, as they left the tent, "ask whether a chief called Redfeather is here. I knew him of old and half expected to find him in this place."

The Indian to whom Jacques put the question replied that Redfeather was with them, but that he had gone out on a hunting expedition that morning and might be absent a day or two.

"Ah!" exclaimed Charley, "I'm glad he's here. Come, now, let us take a walk in the woods; these good people stare at us as if we were ghosts." And taking Jacques's arm, he led him beyond the circuit of the camp, turned into a path which, winding among the thick under-wood, speedily screened them from view, and led them into a sequestered glade, through which a rivulet trickled along its course, almost hid from view by the dense foliage and long grasses that overhung it.

"What a delightful place to live in!" said Charley. "Do you ever think of building a hut in such a spot as this, Jacques, and settling down altogether?"

Charley's thoughts reverted to his sister Kate when he said this.

"Why, no," replied Jacques, in a pensive tone, as if the question had aroused some sorrowful recollections; "I can't say that I'd like to settle down *now*. There *was* a time when I thought nothin' could be better than to squat in the woods with one or two jolly comrades, and—" (Jacques sighed); "but times is changed now, master, and so is my mind. My chums are most of them dead or gone, one way or other. No; I shouldn't care to squat alone."

Charley thought of the hut *without* Kate, and it seemed so desolate and dreary a dwelling, notwithstanding its beautiful situation, that he agreed with his companion that to "squat" *alone* would never do at all.

"No, man was not made to live alone," continued Jacques, pursuing the subject; even the Injins draw together. I never knew but one as didn't like his fellows, and he's gone now, poor fellow. He cut his foot with an axe one day, while fellin' a tree. It was a bad cut; and havin' nobody to look after him, he half bled and half starved to death."

"By the way, Jacques," said Charley, stepping over the clear brook, and following the track which led up the opposite bank, "what did you say to those red-skins? You made them a most eloquent speech apparently."

"Why, as to that, I can't boast much of its eloquence, but I think

it was clear enough. I told them that they were a great nation ; for you see, Mr. Charles, the red men are just like the white in their fondness for butter ; so I gave them some to begin with, though, for the matter o' that, I'm not overly fond o' giving butter to any man, red or white. But I holds that it's as well always to fall in with the ways and customs o' the people a man happens to be among, so long as them ways and customs a'n't contrary to what's right. It makes them feel more kindly to you, an' don't raise any onnecessary ill-will. However, the Knisteneux *are* a brave race ; and when I told them that the hearts of their enemies trembled when they heard of them, I told nothing but the truth ; for the Chipewyans are a miserable set, and not much given to fighting."

"Your principles on that point won't stand much sifting, I fear," replied Charley : "according to your own showing you would fall into the Chipewyan's way of glorifying themselves on account of their bravery if you chanced to be dwelling among them, and yet you say they are not brave. That would not be sticking to truth, Jacques, would it?"

"Well," replied Jacques, with a smile, "perhaps not exactly, but I'm sure there could be small harm in helping the miserable objects to boast sometimes, for they've little else than boasting to comfort them."

"And yet, Jacques, I cannot help feeling that truth is a grand, a glorious thing, that should not be trifled with even in small matters."

Jacques opened his eyes a little. "Then do you think, master, that a man should *never* tell a lie, no matter what fix he may be in?"

"I think not, Jacques."

The hunter paused a few minutes, and looked as if an unusual train of ideas had been raised in his mind by the turn their conversation had taken. Jacques was a man of no religion, and little morality, beyond what flowed from a naturally kind, candid disposition, and entertained the belief that the *end*, if a good one, always justifies the *means*—a doctrine which, had it been clearly exposed to him in all its bearings and results, would have been spurned by his straightforward nature with the indignant contempt that it merits.

"Mr. Charles," he said at length, "I once travelled across the plains to the head waters of the Missouri with a party of six trappers. One night we came to a part of the plains which was very much broken up with wood here and there, and bein' a good place for water we camped. While the other lads were gettin' ready the supper, I started off to look for a deer, as we had been unlucky that day—we had shot nothin'. Well, about three miles from the camp I came upon a band o' somewhere about thirty Sioux (ill-looking, sneaking dogs they are, too !), and before I could whistle they rushed upon me, took my rifle and hunting-knife, and were dancing round me like so many devils. At last a big black-lookin' thief stepped forward, and said in the Cree language, 'White men seldom travel through this country alone ; where are your comrades ? Now, thought I, here's a nice fix ! If I pretend not to understand, they'll send out parties in all directions, and as sure as fate they'll find my companions in half-an-hour, and butcher them in cold blood (for, you see, we did not expect to find Sioux, or indeed any Injins in these parts) ; so I made believe to be very narvous, and tried to tremble all over and look pale. Did you ever try to look pale and frightened, Mr. Charles ?"

"I can't say that I ever did," said Charley, laughing.

"You can't think how troublesome it is," continued Jacques, with a look of earnest simplicity. "I shook and trembled pretty well, but the more I tried to grow pale, the more I grew red in the face, and when I thought of the six broad-shouldered, raw-boned lads in the camp, and how easy they would have made these jumping villains fly like chaff, if they only knew the fix I was in, I gave a frown that had well-nigh showed I was shamming. Hows'ever, what with shakin' a little more and givin' one or two most awful groans, I managed to deceive them. Then I said I was a hunter to a party of white men that were travellin' from Red River to St. Louis, with all their goods, and wives, and children, and that they were away in the plains about a league off.

"The big chap looked very hard into my face when I said this, to see if I was telling the truth; and I tried to make my teeth chatter, but it wouldn't do, so I took to groanin' very bad instead. But them Sioux are such awful liars nat'rally that they couldn't understand the signs of truth, even if they saw them. 'Whitefaced coward,' says he to me, 'tell me in what direction your people are.' At this I made not to understand; but the big chap flourished his knife before my face, called me dog, and told me to point out the direction. I looked as simple as I could, and said I would rather not. At this they laughed loudly, and then gave a yell, and said if I didn't show them the direction they would roast me alive. So I pointed towards a part of the plains pretty wide o' the spot where our camp was. 'Now lead us to them,' said the big chap givin' me a shove with the butt of his gun; 'an' if you have told lies—' he gave the handle of his scalpin'-knife a slap, as much as to say he'd tickle up my liver with it. Well, away we went in silence, me thinkin' all the time how I was to get out of the scrape. I led them pretty close past our camp, hopin' that the lads would hear us. I didn't dare to yell out, as that would have shown them there was somebody within hearin', and they would have made short work of me. Just as we came near the place where my companions lay, a prairie wolf sprang out from under a bush where it had been sleepin', so I gave a loud hurrah, and shied my cap at it. Giving a loud growl, the big Injin hit me over the head with his fist, and told me to keep silence. In a few minutes I heard the low distant howl of a wolf. I recognized the voice of one of my comrades, and knew that they had seen us, and would be on our track soon. Watchin' my opportunity, and walkin' for a good bit as if I was awful tired—all but done up—to throw them off their guard, I suddenly tripped up the big chap as he was stepping over a small brook, and dived in among the bushes. In a moment a dozen bullets tore up the bark of the trees about me, and the arrows passed through my hair. The clump of wood into which I had dived was about half-a-mile long; and as I could run well (I've found in my experience that white men are more than a match for red-skins at their own work), I was almost out of range by the time I was forced to quit the cover and take to the plain. When the blackguards got out of the cover, too, and saw me cuttin' ahead like a deer, they gave a yell of disappointment, and sent another shower of arrows and bullets after me, some of which came nearer than was pleasant. I then headed for our camp with the whole pack screechin' at my heels. 'Yell away, you stupid sinners,' thought I; 'some of you shall pay for your

music.' At that moment an arrow grazed my shoulder, and looking over it, I saw that the black fellow I had pitched into the water was far ahead of the rest, strainin' after me like mad, and ever now and then stopping to try an arrow on me; so I kept a look-out, and when I saw him stop to draw, I stopped too, and dodged, so the arrows passed me, and then we took to our heels again. In this way I ran for dear life till I came up to the cover. As I came close up I saw our six fellows crouchin' in the bushes, and one o' them takin' almost straight for my face. 'Your day's come at last,' thought I, looking over my shoulder at the big Injin, who was drawing his bow again. Just then there was a sharp crack heard; a bullet whistled past my ear, and the big fellow fell like a stone, while my comrade stood coolly up to reload his rifle. The Injins, on seein' this, pulled up in a moment; and our lads stepping forward, delivered a volley that made three more o' them bite the dust. There would have been six in that fix, but, somehow or other, three of us pitched upon the same man, who was afterwards found with a bullet in each eye and one through his heart. They didn't wait for more, but turned about and bolted like the wind. Now Mr. Charles, if I had told the truth that time, we would have been all killed; and if I had simply said nothin' to their questions, they would have sent out to scour the country, and have found out the camp for sartin, so that the only way to escape was by tellin' them a heap o' downright lies."

Charley looked very much perplexed at this.

"You have indeed placed me in a difficulty. I know not what I would have done. I don't know even what I *ought to do* under these circumstances. Difficulties may perplex me, and the force of circumstances might tempt me to do what I believed to be wrong. I am a sinner, Jacques, like other mortals, I know; but one thing I am quite sure of—namely, that when men speaks it should *always* be truth and *never* falsehood."

Jacques looked perplexed too. He was strongly impressed with the necessity of telling falsehood in the circumstances in which he had been placed, as just related, while at the same time he felt deeply the grandeur and the power of Charley's last remark.

"I should have been under the sod *now*," said he, "if I had not told a lie *then*. Is it better to die than to speak falsehood?"

"Some men have thought so," replied Charley. "I acknowledge the difficulty of *your* case, and of all similar cases. I don't know what should be done; but I have read of a minister of the gospel whose people were very wicked and would not attend to his instructions, although they could not but respect himself, he was so consistent and Christianlike in his conduct. Persecution arose in the country where he lived, and men and women were cruelly murdered because of their religious belief. For a long time he was left unmolested; but one day a band of soldiers came to his house, and asked whether he was a Papist or a Protestant (Papist, Jacques, being a man who had sold his liberty in religious matters to the Pope, and a Protestant being one who protests against such an ineffably silly and unmanly state of slavery). Well, his people urged the good old man to say he was a Papist, telling him that he would be spared to live among them, and preach the true faith for many years perhaps. Now if there was one thing that this old man would have toiled for and *died* for, it was that his people should become true Christians—

and he told them so; 'but,' he added, I will not tell a lie to accomplish that end, my children—no, not even to save my life.' So he told the soldiers that he was a Protestant, and immediately they carried him away, and he was soon afterwards burned to death."

"Well," said Jacques, "*he* didn't gain much by sticking to the truth, I think."

"I'm not so sure about *that*. The story goes on to say that he *rejoiced* that he had done so, and wouldn't draw back even when he was in the flames. But the point lies here, Jacques: so deep an impression did the old man's conduct make on his people, that from that day forward they were noted for their Christian life and conduct. They brought up their children with a deeper reverence for the truth than they would otherwise have done, always bearing in affectionate remembrance, and holding up to them as an example, the unflinching truthfulness of the good old man who was burned in the year of the terrible persecutions; and at last their influence and example had such an effect that the Protestant religion spread like wild-fire, far and wide around them, so that the very thing was accomplished for which the old pastor said he would have died—accomplished, too, very much in consequence of his death, and in a way and to an extent that very likely would not have been the case had he lived and preached among them for a hundred years."

"I don't understand it, nohow," said Jacques; "it seems to me right both ways and wrong both ways, and all upside down anyhow."

Charley smiled. "Your remark is about as clear as my head on the subject, Jacques; but I still remain convinced that truth is *right* and that falsehood is *wrong*, and that we should stick to the first through thick and thin."

"I s'pose," remarked the hunter, who had walked along in deep cogitation for the last five minutes, and had apparently come to some conclusion of profound depth and sagacity—"I s'pose that it's all human natur'; that some men takes to preachin' as Injins take to huntin', and that to understand sich things requires them to begin young, and risk their lives in it, as I would in followin' up a grizzly she-bear with cubs."

"Yonder is an illustration of one part of your remark. They begin *young* enough, anyhow," said Charley, pointing as he spoke to an opening in the bushes, where a particularly small Indian boy stood in the act of discharging an arrow.

The two men halted to watch his movements. According to a common custom among juvenile Indians during the warm months of the year, he was dressed in *nothing* save a mere rag tied round his waist. His body was very brown, extremely round, fat, and wonderfully diminutive, while his little legs and arms were disproportionately small. He was so young as to be barely able to walk, and yet there he stood, his black eyes glittering with excitement, his tiny bow bent to its utmost, and a blunt-headed arrow about to be discharged at a squirrel, whose flight had been suddenly arrested by the unexpected apparition of Charley and Jacques. As he stood there for a single instant, perfectly motionless, he might have been mistaken for a grotesque statue of an Indian cupid. Taking advantage of the squirrel's pause, the child let fly the arrow, hit it exactly on the point of the nose, and turned it over, dead—a consummation which he greeted with a rapid succession of frightful yells.

"Cleverly done, my lad; you're a chip of the old block, I see," said Jacques, patting the child's head as he passed, and retraced his steps, with Charley, to the Indian camp.

CHAPTER XV.

The feast—Charley makes his first speech in public, and meets with an old friend—An evening in the grass.

SAVAGES, not less than civilized men, are fond of a good dinner. In saying this, we do not expect our reader to be overwhelmed with astonishment. He might have guessed as much; but when we state that savages, upon particular occasions, eat six dinners in one, and make it a point of honour to do so, we apprehend that we have thrown a slightly new light on an old subject. Doubtless there are men in civilized society who would do likewise if they could; but they cannot, fortunately, as great gastronomic powers are dependent on severe, healthful, and prolonged physical exertion. Therefore it is that in England we find men capable only of eating about two dinners at once, and suffering a good deal for it afterwards; while in the backwoods we see men consume a week's dinners in one, without any evil consequences following the act.

The feast which was given by the Knisteneux in honour of the visit of our two friends was provided on a more moderate scale than usual, in order to accommodate the capacities of the "white men;" three days' allowance being cooked for each man. (Women are never admitted to the public feasts.) On the day preceding the ceremony, Charley and Jacques had received cards of invitation from the principal chief, in the shape of two quills; similar invites being issued at the same time to all the braves. Jacques being accustomed to the doings of Indians, and aware of the fact that whatever was provided for each man *must* be eaten before he quitted the scene of operations, advised Charley to eat no breakfast, and to take a good walk as a preparative. Charley had strong faith, however, in his digestive powers, and felt much inclined, when morning came, to satisfy the cravings of his appetite as usual; but Jacques drew such a graphic picture of the work that lay before him, that he forbore to urge the matter, and went off to walk with a light step, and an uncomfortable feeling of vacuity about the region of the stomach.

About noon, the chiefs and braves assembled in an open enclosure situated in an exposed place on the banks of the river, where the proceedings were watched by the women, children, and dogs. The oldest chief sat himself down on the turf at one end of the enclosure, with Jacques Caradoc on his right hand, and next to him Charley Kennedy, who had ornamented himself with a blue stripe painted down the middle of his nose, and a red bar across his chin. Charley's propensity for fun had led him thus to decorate his face, in spite of his companion's remonstrances,—urging, by way of excuse, that worthy's former argument, "that it was well to fall in with the ways o' the people a man happened to be among, so long as these ways and customs were not contrary to what was right." Now Charley was sure there was nothing wrong in his painting his nose sky-blue, if he thought fit.

Jacques thought it was absurd, and entertained the opinion that it would be more dignified to leave his face "its nat'ral colour."

Charley didn't agree with him at all. He thought it would be paying the Indians a high compliment to follow their customs as far as possible, and said that, after all, his blue nose would not be very conspicuous, as he (Jacques) had told him that he would "look blue" at any rate when he saw the quantity of deer's meat he should have to devour.

Jacques laughed at this, but suggested that the bar across his chin was *red*. Whereupon Charley said that he could easily neutralize that by putting a green star under each eye; and then uttered a fervent wish that his friend Harry Somerville could only see him in that guise. Finding him incorrigible, Jacques, who, notwithstanding his remonstrances, was more than half imbued with Charley's spirit, gave in, and accompanied him to the feast, himself decorated with the additional ornament of a red night-cap, to whose crown was attached a tuft of white feathers.

A fire burned in the centre of the enclosure, round which the Indians seated themselves according to seniority, and with deep solemnity; for it is a trait in the Indian's character that all his ceremonies are performed with extreme gravity. Each man brought a dish or platter, and a wooden spoon.

The old chief, whose hair was very gray, and his face covered with old wounds and scars, received either in war or in hunting, having seated himself, allowed a few minutes to elapse in silence, during which the company sat motionless, gazing at their plates as if they half expected them to become converted into beefsteaks. While they were seated thus, another party of Indians, who had been absent on a hunting expedition, strode rapidly but noiselessly into the enclosure, and seated themselves in the circle. One of these passed close to Charley, and in doing so stooped, took his hand, and pressed it. Charley looked up in surprise, and beheld the face of his old friend Redfeather, gazing at him with an expression in which were mingled affection, surprise, and amusement at the peculiar alteration in his visage.

"Redfeather!" exclaimed Charley, in delight, half rising; but the Indian pressed him down.

"You must not rise," he whispered, and giving his hand another squeeze, passed round the circle, and took his place directly opposite.

Having continued motionless for five minutes with becoming gravity, the company began operations by proceeding to smoke out of the sacred stem—a ceremony which precedes all occasions of importance, and is conducted as follows:—The sacred stem is placed on two forked sticks to prevent its touching the ground, as that would be considered a great evil. A stone pipe is then filled with tobacco, by an attendant appointed specially to that office, and affixed to the stem, which is presented to the principal chief. That individual, with a gravity and *hauteur* that is unsurpassed in the annals of pomposity, receives the pipe in both hands, blows a puff to the east (probably in consequence of its being the quarter whence the sun rises), and thereafter pays a similar mark of attention to the other three points. He then raises the pipe above his head, points and balances it in various directions (for what reason and with what end in view is best known to himself), and replaces it again on the forks.

The company meanwhile observe his proceedings with sedate interest, evidently imbued with the idea that they are deriving from the ceremony a vast amount of edification—an idea which is helped out, doubtless, by the appearance of the women and children, who surround the enclosure, and gaze at the proceedings with looks of awe-struck seriousness that is quite solemnizing to behold.

The chief then makes a speech relative to the circumstance which has called them together; and which is always more or less interlarded with boastful reference to his own deeds, past, present, and prospective, eulogistic remarks on those of his forefathers, and a general condemnation of all other Indian tribes whatever. These speeches are usually delivered with great animation, and contain much poetic allusion to the objects of nature that surround the homes of the savage. The speech being finished, the chief sits down amid a universal "Ho!" uttered by the company with an emphatic prolongation of the last letter—this syllable being the Indian substitute, we presume, for "rapturous applause."

The chief who officiated on the present occasion, having accomplished the opening ceremonies thus far, sat down; while the pipe-bearer presented the sacred stem to the members of the company in succession, each of whom drew a few whiffs and mumbled a few words.

"Do as you see the red-skins do, Mr. Charles," whispered Jacques, while the pipe was going round.

"That's impossible," replied Charley, in a tone that could not be heard except by his friend. "I couldn't make a face of hideous solemnity like that black thief opposite if I was to try ever so hard."

"Don't let them think you're laughing at them," returned the hunter; "they would be ill-pleased if they thought so."

"I'll try," said Charley, "but it is hard work, Jacques, to keep from laughing; I feel like a high-pressure steam-engine already. There's a woman standing out there with a little brown baby on her back; she has quite fascinated me; I can't keep my eyes off her, and if she goes on contorting her visage much longer, I feel that I shall give way."

"Hush!"

At this moment the pipe was presented to Charley, who put it to his lips, drew three whiffs, and returned it with a bland smile to the bearer.

The smile was a very sweet one, for that was a peculiar trait in the native urbanity of Charley's disposition, and it would have gone far in civilized society to prepossess strangers in his favour; but it lowered him considerably in the estimation of his red friends, who entertained a wholesome feeling of contempt for any appearance of levity on high occasions. But Charley's face was of that agreeable stamp that, though gentle and bland when lighted up with a smile, is particularly masculine and manly in expression when in repose, and the frown that knit his brows when he observed the bad impression he had given almost reinstated him in their esteem. But his popularity became great, and the admiration of his swarthy friends greater, when he rose and made an eloquent speech in English, which Jacques translated into the Indian language.

He told them, in reply to the chief's oration (wherein that warrior had complimented his pale-faced brothers on their numerous good

qualities), that he was delighted and proud to meet with his Indian friends; that the object of his mission was to acquaint them with the fact that a new trading-fort was established not far off, by himself and his comrades, for their special benefit and behoof; that the stores were full of goods which he hoped they would soon obtain possession of, in exchange for furs; that he had travelled a great distance on purpose to see their land and ascertain its capabilities in the way of fur-bearing animals and game; that he had not been disappointed in his expectations, as he had found the animals to be as numerous as bees, the fish plentiful in the rivers and lakes, and the country at large a perfect paradise. He proceeded to tell them further that he expected they would justify the report he had heard of them that they were a brave nation and good hunters, by bringing in large quantities of furs.

Being strongly urged by Jacques to compliment them on their various good qualities, Charley launched out into an extravagantly poetic vein, said that he had *heard* (but he hoped to have many opportunities of seeing it proved) that there was no nation under the sun equal to them in bravery, activity, and perseverance; that he had heard of men in olden times who made it their profession to fight with wild bulls for the amusement of their friends, but he had no doubt whatever their courage would be made conspicuous in the way of fighting wild bears and buffaloes, not for the amusement but the benefit of their wives and children (he might have added, of the Hudson's Bay Company, but he didn't, supposing that that was self-evident, probably). He complimented them on the way in which they had conducted themselves in war in times past, comparing their stealthy approach to enemies' camps to the insidious snake that glides among the bushes and darts unexpectedly on its prey; said that their eyes were sharp to follow the war-trail through the forest or over the dry sward of the prairie; their aim with gun or bow true and sure as the flight of the goose when it leaves the lands of the sun, and points its beak to the icy regions of the north; their war-whoops loud as the thunders of the cataract; and their sudden onset like the lightning flash that darts from the sky and scatters the stout oak in splinters on the plain.

At this point Jacques expressed his satisfaction at the style in which his young friend was progressing.

"That's your sort, Mr. Charles. Don't spare the butter; lay it on thick. You've not said too much yet, for they *are* a brave race, that's a fact, as I've good reason to know."

Jacques, however, did not feel quite so well satisfied when Charley went on to tell them that, although bravery in war was an admirable thing, war itself was a thing not at all to be desired, and should only be undertaken in case of necessity. He especially pointed out that there was not much glory to be earned in fighting against the Chipewyans, who, everybody knew, were a poor, timid set of people, whom they ought rather to pity than to destroy; and recommended them to devote themselves more to the chase than they had done in times past, and less to the prosecution of war in time to come.

All this, and a great deal more, did Charley say, in a manner, and with a rapidity of utterance, that surprised himself, when he considered the fact that he had never ventured into the field of public speaking before. All this, and a great deal more—a *very* great deal

more—did Jacques Caradoc interpret to the admiring Indians, who listened with the utmost gravity and profound attention, greeting the close with a very emphatic “Ho !”

Jacque’s translation was by no means perfect. Many of the flights into which Charley ventured, especially in regard to the manners and customs of the *savages* of ancient Greece and Rome, were quite incomprehensible to the worthy backwoodsman ; but he invariable proceeded when Charley halted, giving a flight of his own when at loss, varying and modifying when he thought it advisable, and altering, adding, or cutting off as he pleased.

Several other chiefs addressed the assembly, and then dinner, if we may so call it, was served. In Charley’s case it was breakfast ; to the Indians it was breakfast, dinner and supper in one. It consisted of a large platter of dried meat, reindeer tongues (considered a great delicacy), and marrow-bones.

Notwithstanding the graphic power with which Jacques had prepared his young companion for this meal, Charley’s heart sank when he beheld the mountain of boiled meat that was placed before him. He was ravenously hungry, it is true, but it was patent to his perception at a glance that no powers of gormandizing of which he was capable could enable him to consume the mass in the course of one day.

Jacques observed his consternation, and was not a little entertained by it, although his face wore an expression of profound gravity while he proceeded to attack his own dish, which was equal to that of his friend.

Before commencing, a small portion of meat was thrown into the fire, as a sacrifice to the Great Master of Life.

“How they do eat, to be sure !” whispered Charley to Jacques, after he had glanced in wonder at the circle of men who were devouring their food with the most extraordinary rapidity.

“Why, you must know,” replied Jacques, “that it’s considered a point of honour to get it over soon, and the man that is done first gets most credit. But it’s hard work” (he sighed, and paused a little to breathe), “and I’ve not got half through yet.”

“It’s quite plain that I must lose credit with them, then, if it depends on my eating that. Tell me, Jacques, is their no way of escape ? Must I sit here till it is all consumed ?”

“No doubt of it. Every bit that has been cooked must be crammed down our throats somehow or other.”

Charley heaved a deep sigh, and made another desperate attack on a large steak, while the Indians around him made considerable progress in reducing their respective mountains.

Several times Charley and Redfeather exchanged glances as they paused in their labours.

“I say, Jacques,” said Charley, pulling up once more, “how do you get on ? Pretty well stuffed by this time, I should imagine ?”

“Oh no ! I’ve a good deal o’ room yet.”

“I give in. Credit or disgrace, it’s all one. I’ll not make a pig of myself for any red-skin in the land.”

Jacques smiled.

“See,” continued Charley, “there’s a fellow opposite who has devoured as much as would have served me for three days. I don’t know whether it’s imagination or not, but I do verily believe that he’s *blacker* in the face than when he sat down !”

"Very likely," replied Jacques, wiping his lips. "Now I've done."

"Done? you have left at least a third of your supply."

"True, and I may as well tell you for your comfort that there is one way of escape open to you. It is a custom among these fellows, that when any one cannot gulp his share o' the prog, he may get help from any of his friends who can cram it down their throats; and as there are always such fellows among these Injins, they seldom have any difficulty."

"A most convenient practice," replied Charley; "I'll adopt it at once."

Charley turned to his next neighbour with the intent to beg of him to eat his remnant of the feast.

"Bless my heart, Jacques, I've no chance with the fellow on my left hand; he's stuffed quite full already, and is not quite done with his own share."

"Never fear," replied his friend, looking at the individual in question, who was languidly lifting a marrow bone to his lips; "he'll do it easy. I knows the gauge o' them chaps, and for all his sleepy look just now he's game for a lot more."

"Impossible," replied Charley, looking in despair at his unfinished viands and then at the Indian. A glance round the circle seemed further to convince him that if he did not eat it himself there were none of the party likely to do so.

"You'll have to give him a good lump o' tobacco to do it, though; he won't undertake so much for a trifle, I can tell you." Jacques chuckled as he said this, and handed his own portion over to another Indian, who readily undertook to finish it for him.

"He'll burst; I feel certain of that," said Charley with a deep sigh, as he surveyed his friend on the left.

At last he took courage to propose the thing to him, and just as the man finished the last morsel of his own repast, Charley placed his own plate before him, with a look that seemed to say, "Eat it, my friend, *if you can*."

The Indian, much to his surprise, immediately commenced to it, and in less than half-an-hour the whole was disposed of.

During this scene of gluttony, one of the chiefs entertained the assembly with a wild and most unmusical chant, to which he beat time on a sort of tambourine, while the women outside of the enclosure beat a similar accompaniment.

"I say, master," whispered Jacques, it seems to my observation that the fellow you called Redfeather eats less than any Injin I ever saw. He has got a comrade to eat more than half of his share; now that's strange."

"It won't appear strange, Jacques, when I tell you that Redfeather has lived much more among white men than Indians during the last ten years; and although voyageurs eat an enormous quantity of food, they don't make it a point of honour, as these fellows seem to do, to eat much more than enough. Besides, Redfeather is a very different man from those around him; he has been partially educated by the missionaries on Playgreen Lake, and I think has a strong leaning towards them."

While they were thus conversing in whispers, Redfeather rose, and holding forth his hand, delivered himself of the following oration:—

"The time has come for Redfeather to speak. He has kept silence

for many moons now, but his heart has been full of words. It is too full; he must speak now. Redfeather has fought with his tribe, and has been accounted a brave, and one who loves his people. This is true. He *does* love, even more than they can understand. His friends know that he has never feared to face danger or death in their defence, and that, if it were necessary, he would do so still. But Redfeather is going to leave his people now. His heart is heavy at the thought. Perhaps many moons will come and go, many snows may fall and melt away, before he sees his people again; and it is this that makes him full of sorrow, it is this that makes his head to droop like the branches of the weeping willow."

Redfeather paused at this point, but not a sound escaped from the listening circle: the Indians were evidently taken by surprise at this abrupt announcement. He proceeded:—

"When Redfeather travelled not long since with the white men, he met with a pale-face who came from the other side of the Great Salt Lake towards the rising sun. This man was called by some of the people a missionary. He spoke wonderful words in the ears of Redfeather. He told him of things about the Great Spirit which he did not know before, and he asked Redfeather to go and help him to speak to the Indians about these strange things. Redfeather would not go. He loved his people too much, and he thought that the words of the missionary seemed foolishness. But he has thought much about it since. He does not understand the strange things that were told to him, and he has tried to forget them, but he cannot. He can get no rest. He hears strange sounds in the breeze that shakes the pine. He thinks that there are voices in the waterfall; the rivers seem to speak. Redfeather's spirit is vexed. The Great Spirit, perhaps, is talking to him. He has resolved to go to the dwelling of the missionary and stay with him."

The Indian paused again, but still no sound escaped from his comrades. Dropping his voice to a soft plaintive tone, he continued,—

"But Redfeather loves his kindred. He desires very much that they should hear the things that the missionary said. He spoke of the happy hunting-grounds to which the spirits of our fathers have gone, and said that we required a guide to lead us there; that there was but one guide, whose name, he said, was Jesus. Redfeather would stay and hunt with his people, but his spirit is troubled; he cannot rest; he must go!"

Redfeather sat down, and a long silence ensued. His words had evidently taken the whole party by surprise, although not a countenance there showed the smallest symptom of astonishment, except that of Charley Kennedy, whose intercourse with Indians had not yet been so great as to have taught him to conceal his feelings.

At length the old chief rose, and after complimenting Redfeather on his bravery in general, and admitting that he had shown much love to his people on all occasions, went into the subject of his quitting them at some length. He reminded him that there were evil spirits as well as good; that it was not for him to say which kind had been troubling him, but that he ought to consider well before he went to live altogether with pale-faces. Several other speeches were made, some to the same effect, and others applauding his resolve. These latter had, perhaps, some idea that his bringing the pale-faced missionary among them would gratify their taste for

the marvellous—a taste that is pretty strong in all uneducated minds.

One man, however, was particularly urgent in endeavouring to dissuade him from his purpose. He was a tall, low-browed man; muscular and well-built, but possessed of a most villanous expression of countenance. From a remark that fell from one of the company Charley discovered that his name was Misconna, and so learned, to his surprise, that he was the very Indian mentioned by Redfeather as the man who had been his rival for the hand of Wabisca, and who had so cruelly killed the wife of the poor trapper the night on which the Chipewyan camp was attacked, and the people slaughtered.

What reason Misconna had for objecting so strongly to Redfeather's leaving the community no one could tell, although some of those who knew his unforgiving nature suspected that he still entertained the hope of being able, some day or other, to wreak his vengeance on his old rival. But whatever was his object, he failed in moving Redfeather's resolution; and it was at last admitted by the whole party that Redfeather was a "wise chief;" that he knew best what ought to be done under the circumstances, and it was hoped that his promised visit, in company with the missionary would not be delayed many moons.

That night, in the deep shadow of the trees, by the brook that murmured near the Indian camp, while the stars twinkled through the branches overhead, Charley introduced Redfeather to his friend Jacques Caradoc, and a friendship was struck up between the bold hunter and the red man that grew and strengthened as each successive day made them acquainted with their respective good qualities. In the same place, and with the same stars looking down upon them, it was further agreed that Redfeather should accompany his new friends, taking his wife along with him in another canoe, as far as their several routes led in the same direction, which was about four or five days' journey; and that while the one party diverged towards the fort at Stoney Creek, the other should pursue its course to the missionary station on the shores of Lake Winnipeg.

But there was a snake in the grass there that they little suspected. Misconna had crept through the bushes after them, with a degree of caution that might have baffled their vigilance, even had they suspected treason in a friendly camp. He lay listening intently to all their plans, and when they returned to their camp, he rose out from among the bushes, like a dark spirit of evil, clutched the handle of his scalping-knife, and gave utterance to a malicious growl; then walking hastily after them, his dusky figure was soon concealed among the trees.

CHAPTER XVI.

The return—Narrow escape—A murderous attempt, which fails—And a discovery.

ALL nature was joyous and brilliant, and bright and beautiful. Morning was still very young—about an hour old. Sounds of the most cheerful light-hearted character floated over the waters and echoed through the woods, as birds and beasts hurried to and fro with all the bustling energy that betokened preparation and search for breakfast. Fish leaped in the pools with a rapidity that brought forcibly to mind that wise saying, "The more hurry the less speed;"

for they appeared constantly to miss their mark, although they jumped twice their own length out of the water in the effort.

Ducks and geese sprang from their liquid beds with an amazing amount of unnecessary sputter, as if they had awakened to the sudden consciousness of being late for breakfast, then alighted in the water again with a *squash*, on finding (probably) that it was too early for that meal but, observing other flocks passing and repassing on noisy wing, took to flight again, unable, apparently, to restrain their feelings of delight at the freshness of the morning air, the brightness of the rising sun, and the sweet perfume of the dewy verdure, as the mists cleared away over the tree-tops and lost themselves in the blue sky. Everything seemed instinct not only with life, but with a large amount of superabundant energy. Earth, air, sky, animal, vegetable, and mineral, solid and liquid, all were either actually in a state of lively exulting motion, or had a peculiarly sprightly look about them, as if nature had just burst out of prison *en masse*, and gone raving mad with joy.

Such was the delectable state of things the morning on which two canoes darted from the camp of the Knisteneux, amid many expressions of good-will. One canoe contained our two friends, Charley and Jacques; the other, Redfeather and his wife Wabisca.

A few strokes of the paddle shot them out into the stream, which carried them rapidly away from the scene of their late festivities. In five minutes they swept round a point which shut them out from view, and they were swiftly descending those rapid rivers that had cost Charley and Jacques so much labour to ascend.

"Look out for rocks ahead, Mr. Charles," cried Jacques, as he steered the light bark into the middle of a rapid, which they had avoided when ascending by making a portage. "Keep well to the left o' yon swirl. *Parbleu*, if we touch the rock *there* it'll be all over with us."

"All right," was Charley's laconic reply. And so it proved, for their canoe, after getting fairly into the run of the rapid, was evidently under the complete command of its expert crew, and darted forward amid the foaming waters like a thing instinct with life. Now it careered and plunged over the waves where the rough bed of the stream made them more than usually turbulent. Anon it flew with increased rapidity through a narrow gap where the compressed water was smooth and black, but deep and powerful, rendering great care necessary to prevent the canoe's frail sides from being dashed on the rocks. Then it met a curling wave, into which it plunged like an impetuous charger, and was checked for a moment by its own violence. Presently an eddy threw the canoe a little out of its course, disconcerting Charley's intention of *shaving* a rock which lay in their track, so that he slightly grazed it in passing.

"Ah, Mr. Charles," said Jacques, shaking his head, "that was not well done; an inch more would have sent us down the rapids like drowned cats."

"True," replied Charley, somewhat crestfallen; but you see the other inch was not lost, so we're not much the worse for it."

"Well, after all, it was a ticklish bit, and I should have guessed that your experience was not up to it quite. I've seen many a man in my day who wouldn't ha' done it *half* so slick, an' yet ha' thought no small beer o' himself; so you needn't be ashamed, Mr. Charles.

But Wabisca beats you for all that," continued the hunter, glancing hastily over his shoulder at Redfeather, who followed closely in their wake, he and his modest-looking wife guiding their little craft through the dangerous passage with the utmost *sangfroid* and precision.

"We've about run them all now," said Jacques as they paddled over a sheet of still water which intervened between the rapid they had just descended and another which thundered about a hundred yards in advance.

"I was so engrossed with the one we had just come down," said Charley, "that I quite forgot this one."

"Quite right, Mr. Charles," said Jacques, in an approving tone, "quite right. I holds that a man should always attend to what he's at, an' to nothin' else. I've lived long in the woods now, and that fact becomes more and more sartin every day. I've know'd chaps, now, as timersome as settlement girls, that were always in such a mortal funk about what *was* to happen, or *might* happen, that they were never fit for anything that *did* happen; always lookin' ahead, and never around them. Of course, I don't mean that a man shouldn't look ahead at all, but their great mistake was that they looked out too far ahead, and always kep' their eyes nailed there, just as if they had the fixin' o' everything, an' Providence had nothin' to do with it at all. I mind a Canadian o' that sort that travelled in company with me once. We were goin' just as we are now, Mr. Charles, two canoes of us; him and a comrade in one, and me and a comrade in t'other. One night we got to a lot o' rapids that came one after another for the matter o' three miles or thereabouts. They were all easy ones, however, except the last; but it *was* a tickler, with a sharp turn o' the land that hid it from sight till ye were right into it, with a foamin' current, and a range o' ragged rocks that stood straight in front o' ye, like the teeth of a cross-cut saw. It was easy enough, however, if a man *knew* it, and was a cool hand. Well, the *pauvre* Canadian was in a terrible takin' about this shoot long afore he came to it. He had run it often enough in boats where he was one of a half-dozen men, and had nothin' to do but look on; but he had never *steered* down it before. When he came to the top o' the rapids, his mind was so filled with this shoot that he couldn't attend to nothin', and scraped agin' a dozen rocks in almost smooth water, so that when he got little more than half-way down, the canoe was as rickety as if it had just come off a six months' cruise. At last we came to the big rapid, and after we'd run down our canoe I climbed the bank to see them do it. Down they came, the poor Canadian white as a sheet, and his comrade, who was brave enough, but knew nothin' about light craft, not very comfortable. At first he could see nothin' for the point, but in another moment round they went, and end on, for the big rocks. The Canadian gave a great yell when he saw them, and plunged at the paddle till I thought he'd have capsized altogether. They ran it well enough, straight between the rocks (more by good luck than good guidance), and sloped down to the smooth water below; but the canoe had got such a battering in the rapids above, where an Injin baby could have steered it in safety, that the last plunge shook it all to pieces. It opened up, and lay down flat on the water, while the two men fell right through the bottom, screechin' like mad, and rolling about among shreds o' birch-bark!"

While Jacques was thus descanting philosophically on his experiences in time past, they had approached the head of the second rapid, and in accordance with the principles just enunciated, the stout backwoodsman gave his undivided attention to the work before him. The rapid was short and deep, so that little care was required in descending it, excepting at one point, where the stream rushed impetuously between two rocks about six yards asunder. Here it was requisite to keep the canoe as much in the middle of the stream as possible.

Just as they began to feel the drag of the water, Redfeather was heard to shout in a loud warning tone, which caused Jacques and Charley to back their paddles hurriedly.

"What can the Injin mean, I wonder?" said Jacques, in a preplexed tone. "He don't look like a man that would stop us at the top of a strong rapid for nothin'."

"It's too late to do that now, whatever is his reason," said Charley, as he and his companion struggled in vain to paddle up stream.

"It's o' no use, Mr. Charles ; we must run it now—the current's too strong to make head against : besides, I do think the man has only seen a bear, or somethin' o' that sort, for I see he's ashore, and jumpin' among the bushes like a cariboo."

Saying this, they turned the canoe's head down stream again, and allowed it to drift, merely retarding its progress a little with the paddles.

Suddenly Jacques uttered a sharp exclamation. "*Mon Dieu !*" said he, "it's plain enough now. Look there !"

Jacques pointed as he spoke to the narrows to which they were now approaching with tremendous speed, which increased every instant. A heavy tree lay directly across the stream, reaching from rock to rock, and placed in such a way that it was impossible for a canoe to descend without being dashed in pieces against it. This was the more curious that no trees grew in the immediate vicinity, so that this one must have been designedly conveyed there.

"There has been foul work here," said Jacques, in a deep tone. "We must dive, Mr. Charles ; there's no chance any way else, and *that's* but a poor one."

This was true. The rocks on each side rose almost perpendicularly out of the water, so that it was utterly impossible to run ashore, and the only way of escape, as Jacques said, was by diving under the tree, a thing involving great risk, as the stream immediately below was broken by rocks, against which it dashed in foam, and through which the chances of steering one's way in safety by means of swimming were very slender indeed.

Charley made no reply, but with tightly compressed lips, and a look of stern resolution on his brow, threw off his coat, and hastily tied his belt tightly round his waist. The canoe was now sweeping forward with lightning speed ; in a few minutes it would be dashed to pieces.

At that moment a shout was heard in the woods, and Redfeather darting out, rushed over the ledge of rock on which one end of the tree rested, seized the trunk in his arms, and exerting all his strength, hurled it over into the river. In doing so he stumbled, and ere he could recover himself a branch caught him under the arm as the tree

fell over, and dragged him into the boiling stream. This accident was probably the means of saving his life, for just as he fell the loud report of a gun rang through the woods, and a bullet passed through his cap. For a second or two both man and tree were lost in the foam, while the canoe dashed past in safety. The next instant Wabisca passed the narrows in her small craft, and steered for the tree. Redfeather, who had risen and sunk several times, saw her as she passed, and making a violent effort, he caught hold of the gunwale, and was carried down in safety.

"I'll tell you what it is," said Jacques, as the party stood on a rock promontory after the events just narrated: "I would give a dollar to have that fellow's nose and the sight o' my rifle in a line at any distance short of two hundred yards."

"It was Misconna," said Redfeather. "I did not see him, but there's not another man in the tribe that could do that."

"I'm thankful we escaped, Jacques. I never felt so near death before, and had it not been for the timely aid of our friend here, it strikes me that our wild life would have come to an abrupt close—God bless you, Redfeather," said Charley, taking the Indian's hand in both of his and kissing it.

Charley's ebullition of feeling was natural. He had not yet become used to the dangers of the wilderness so as to treat them with indifference. Jacques, on the other hand, had risked his life so often that escape from danger was treated very much as a matter of course, and called forth little expression of feeling. Still, it must not be inferred from this that his nature had become callous. The backwoodsman's frame was hard and unyielding as iron, but his heart was as soft still as it was on the day on which he first donned the hunting-shirt, and there was much more of tenderness than met the eye in the squeeze that he gave Redfeather's hand on landing.

As the four travellers encircled the fire that night, under the leafy branches of the forest, and smoked their pipes in concert, while Wabisca busied herself in clearing away the remnants of their evening meal, they waxed communicative, and stories, pathetic, comic, and tragic, followed each other in rapid succession.

"Now, Redfeather," said Charley, while Jacques rose and went down to the luggage to get more tobacco, "tell Jacques about the way in which you got your name. I am sure he will feel deeply interested in that story—at least I am certain that Harry Somerville and I did when you told it to us the day we were wind-bound on Lake Winnipeg."

Redfeather made no reply for a few seconds. "Will Mr. Charles speak for me?" he said at length; "his tongue is smooth and quick." "A doubtful kind of compliment," said Charley, laughing; "but I will, if you don't wish to tell it yourself."

"And don't mention names. Do not let him know that you speak of me or my friends," say the Indian, in a low whisper, as Jacques returned and sat down by the fire again.

Charley gave him a glance of surprise; but being prevented from asking questions, he nodded in reply, and proceeded to relate to his friend the story that has been recounted in a previous chapter. Redfeather leaned back against a tree, and appeared to listen intently.

Charley's powers of description were by no means inconsiderable,



Departure of Charley and Jacques from the
Camp of the Indians.

and the backwoodsman's face assumed a look of good-humoured attention as the story proceeded. But when the narrator went on to tell of the meditated attack and the midnight march, his interest was aroused, the pipe which he had been smoking was allowed to go out, and he gazed at his young friend with the most earnest attention. It was evident that the hunter's spirit entered with deep sympathy into such scenes; and when Charley described the attack, and the death of the trapper's wife, Jacques seemed unable to restrain his feelings. He leant his elbows on his knees, buried his face in his hands, and groaned aloud.

"Mr. Charles," he said, in a deep voice, when the story was ended, "there are two men I would like to meet with in this world before I die. One is the young Injin who tried to save that girl's life, the other is the cowardly villain that took it. I don't mean the one who finished the bloody work; my rifle sent his accursed spirit to its own place—"

"Your rifle!" cried Charley, in amazement.

"Ay, mine! It was *my* wife who was butchered by these savage dogs on that dark night. Oh, what avails the strength o' that right arm!" said Jacques bitterly, as he lifted up his clinched fist; it was powerless to save *her*—the sweet girl who left her home and people to follow me, a rough hunter, through the lonesome wilderness?"

He covered his face again, and groaned in agony of spirit, while his whole frame quivered with emotion.

Jacques remained silent, and his sympathizing friends refrained from intruding on a sorrow which they felt they had no power to relieve.

At length he spoke. "Yes," said he; "I would give much to meet with the man who tried to save her. I saw him do it twice; but the devils about him were too eager to be balked of their prey."

Charley and the Indian exchanged glances. "That Indian's name," said the former, "was *Redfeather*!"

"What!" exclaimed the trapper, jumping to his feet, and grasping Redfeather, who had also risen, by the two shoulders, stared wildly into his face; "was it *you* that did it?"

Redfeather smiled, and held out his hand, which the other took and wrung with an energy that would have extorted a cry of pain from any one but an Indian. Then, dropping it suddenly and clinching his hands, he exclaimed,—

"I said that I would like to meet the villain who killed her—yes, I said it in passion, when your words had roused all my old feelings again; but I am thankful—I bless God that I did not know this sooner—that you did not tell me of it when I was at the camp, for I verily believe that I would not only have fixed *him*, but half the warriors o' your tribe too, before they had settled *me*!"

It need scarcely be added that the friendship which already subsisted between Jacques and Redfeather was now doubly cemented; nor will it create surprise when we say that the former, in the fulness of his heart, and from sheer inability to find adequate outlets for the expression of his feelings, offered Redfeather in succession all the articles of value he possessed, even to his much-loved rifle, and was seriously annoyed at their not being accepted. At last he finished off by assuring the Indian that he might look out for him soon at the

missionary settlement, where he meant to stay with him evermore in the capacity of hunter, fisherman, and jack-of-all-trades to the whole clan.

CHAPTER XVII.

The scene changes—Bachelors' Hall—A practical joke and its consequences—A snow-shoe walk at night in the forest.

LEAVING Charley to pursue his adventurous career among the Indians, we will introduce our reader to a new scene, and follow for a time the fortunes of our friend Harry Somerville. It will be remembered that we left him labouring under severe disappointment at the idea of having to spend a year, it might be many years, at the depot, and being condemned to the desk, instead of realising his fond dreams of bear-hunting and deer-stalking in the woods and prairies.

It was now the autumn of Harry's second year at York Fort. This period of the year happens to be the busiest at the depot, in consequence of the preparation of the annual accounts for transmission to England, in the solitary ship which visits this lonely spot once a year ; so that Harry was tied to his desk all day and the greater part of the night too, till his spirits fell infinitely below zero, and he began to look on himself as the most miserable of mortals. His spirits rose, however, with amazing rapidity after the ship went away, and the "young gentlemen," as the clerks were styled *en masse*, were permitted to run wild in the swamps and woods for the three weeks succeeding that event. During this glimpse of sunshine they recruited their exhausted frames by paddling about all day in Indian canoes, or wandering through the marshes, sleeping at nights in tents or under the pine trees, and spreading dismay among the feathered tribes, of which there were immense numbers of all kinds. After this they returned to their regular work at the desk ; but as this was not so severe as in the summer, and was further lightened by Wednesdays and Saturdays being devoted entirely to recreation, Harry began to look on things in a less gloomy aspect, and at length regained his wonted cheerful spirits.

Autumn passed away. The ducks and geese took their departure to more genial climes. The swamps froze up and became solid. Snow fell in great abundance, covering every vestige of vegetable nature, except the dark fir trees, that only helped to render the scenery more dreary, and winter settled down upon the land. Within the pickets of York Fort, the thirty or forty souls who lived there were actively employed in cutting their firewood, putting in double window-frames to keep out the severe cold, cutting tracks in the snow from one house to another, and otherwise preparing for a winter of eight months' duration, as cold as that of Nova Zembla, and in the course of which the only new faces they had any chance of seeing were those of the two men who conveyed the annual winter packet of letters from the next station. Outside of the fort all was a wild, waste wilderness for *thousands* of miles around. Deathlike stillness and solitude reigned everywhere, except when a convey of ptarmigan whirled like large snowflakes athwart the sky, or an arctic fox prowled stealthily through the woods in search of prey.

As if in opposition to the gloom and stillness and solitude outside, the interior of the clerks' house presented a striking contrast of ruddy warmth, cheerful sounds, and bustling activity.

It was evening ; but although the sun had set, there was still sufficient daylight to render candles unnecessary, though not enough to prevent a bright glare from the stove in the centre of the hall taking full effect in the darkening chamber, and making it glow with fiery red. Harry Somerville sat in front, and full in the blaze of this stove resting after the labours of the day ; his arms crossed on his breast, his head a little to one side, as if in deep contemplation, as he gazed earnestly into the fire, and his chair tilted on its hind legs so as to balance with such nicety that a feather's weight additional outside its centre of gravity would have upset it. He had divested himself of his coat—a practice that prevailed among the young gentlemen when *at home*, as being free-and-easy as well as convenient. The doctor, a tall broad-shouldered man, with red hair and whiskers, paced the room sedately, with a long pipe depending from his lips, which he removed occasionally to address a few remarks to the accountant, a stout heavy man of about thirty, with a voice like a Stentor, eyes sharp and active as those of a ferret, and a tongue that moved with twice the ordinary amount of lingual rapidity. The doctor's remarks seemed to be particularly humorous, if one might judge from the peals of laughter with which they were received by the accountant, who stood with his back to the stove in such a position that, while it warmed him from his heels to his waist, he enjoyed the additional benefit of the pipe or chimney, which rose upwards, parallel with his spine, and, taking a sudden bend near the roof, passed over his head—thus producing a genial and equable warmth from top to toe.

"Yes," said the doctor ; "I left him hotly following up a rabbit-track in the firm belief that it was that of a silver fox."

"And did you not undeceive the green-horn ?" cried the accountant with another shout of laughter.

"Not I," replied the doctor. "I merely recommended him to keep his eye on the sun, lest he should lose his way, and hastened home ; for it just occurred to me that I had forgotten to visit Louis Blanc, who cut his foot with an axe yesterday, and whose wound required redressing, so I left the poor youth to learn from experience."

"Pray, who did you leave to that delightful fate?" asked Mr. Wilson, issuing from his bedroom and approaching the stove.

Mr. Wilson was a middle-aged, good-humoured, active man, who filled the onerous offices of superintendent of the men, trader of furs, seller of goods to the Indians, and general factotum.

"Our friend Hamilton," answered the doctor, in reply to his question. "I think he is, without exception, the most egregious nincompoop I ever saw. Just as I passed the long swamp on my way home, I met him crashing through the bushes in hot pursuit of a rabbit, the track of which he mistook for a fox. Poor fellow ! he had been out since breakfast, and only shot a brace of ptarmigan, although they are as thick as bees and quite tame. 'But then, do you see,' said he, in excuse, 'I'm so very short-sighted ! Would you believe it, I've blown fifteen lumps of snow to atoms, in the belief that they were ptarmigan !' and then he rushed off again."

"No doubt," said Mr. Wilson, smiling, "the lad is very green, but he's a good fellow for all that"

"I'll answer for that," said the accountant: "I found him over at the men's houses this morning doing *your* work for you doctor."

"How so?" inquired the disciple of Æsculapius.

"Attending to your wounded man, Louis Blanc, to be sure; and he seemed to speak to him as wisely as if he had walked the hospitals, and regularly passed for an M.D."

"Indeed!" said the doctor, with a mischievous grin. "Then I must pay him off for interfering with my patients."

"Ah, doctor, you're too fond of practical jokes. You never let slip an opportunity of 'paying off' your friends for something or other. It's a bad habit. Practical jokes are very bad things—shockingly bad," said Mr. Wilson, as he put on his fur cap, and wound a thick shawl round his throat, preparatory to leaving the room.

As Mr. Wilson gave utterance to this opinion, he passed Harry Somerville, who was still staring at the fire in deep mental abstraction and, as he did so, gave his tilted chair a very slight push backwards with his finger—an action which caused Harry to toss up his legs, grasp convulsively with both hands at empty air, and fall with a loud noise and an angry yell to the ground, while his persecutor vanished from the scene.

"O you outrageous villian!" cried Harry, shaking his fist at the door, as he slowly gathered himself up: "I might have expected that."

"Quite so," said the doctor; "you might. It was very neatly done, undoubtedly. Wilson deserves credit for the way in which it was executed."

"He deserves to be executed for doing it at all," replied Harry, rubbing his elbow as he resumed his seat.

"Any bark knocked off?" inquired the accountant, as he took a piece of glowing charcoal from the stove wherewith to light his pipe. "Try a whiff, Harry. It's good for such things. Bruises, sores, contusions, sprains, rheumatic affections of the back and loins, carbuncles and earache—there's nothing that smoking won't cure; eh, doctor?"

"Certainly. If applied inwardly, there's nothing so good for digestion when one doesn't require tonics.—Try it, Harry; it will do you good, I assure you."

"No, thank you," replied Harry; "I'll leave that to you and the chimney. I don't wish to make a soot-bag of my mouth. But tell me, doctor, what do you mean to do with that lump of snow there?"

Harry pointed to a mass of snow, of about two feet square, which lay on the floor beside the door. It had been placed there sometime previously.

"Do with it? Have patience, my friend, and you shall see. It is a little surprise I have in store for Hamilton."

As he spoke, the door opened, and a short, square-built man rushed into the room, with a pistol in one hand and a bright little bullet in the other.

"Hallo, skipper!" cried Harry, "what's the row?"

"All right," cried the skipper; "here it is at last, solid as the fluke of an anchor. Toss me the powder-flask, Harry; look sharp else it'll melt."

A powder-flask was immediately produced, from which the skipper hastily charged the pistol, and rammed down the shining bullet.

"Now then," said he, "look out for squalls. Clear the decks there."

And rushing to the door, he flung it open, took a steady aim at something outside, and fired.

"Is the man mad?" said the accountant, as with a look of amazement he beheld the skipper spring through the doorway, and immediately return bearing in his arms a large piece of fir plank.

"Not quite mad yet," he said, in reply, "but I've sent a ball of quicksilver through an inch plank, and that's not a thing to be done every day—even *here*, although it is cold enough sometimes to freeze up one's very ideas."

"Dear me," interrupted Harry Somerville, looking as if a new thought had struck him, "that must be it! I've no doubt that poor Hamilton's ideas are *frozen*, which accounts for the total absence of any indication of his possessing such things."

"I observed," continued the skipper, not noticing the interruption, "that the glass was down at 45 degrees below zero this morning, and put out a bullet-mould full of mercury, and you see the result." As he spoke he held up the perforated plank in triumph.

The skipper was a strange mixture of qualities. To a wild, off-hand, sailor-like hilarity of disposition in hours of leisure, he united a grave, stern energy of character while employed in the performance of his duties. Duty was always paramount with him. A smile could scarcely be extracted from him while it was in the course of performance. But the instant his work was done a new spirit seemed to take possession of the man. Fun, mischief of any kind, no matter how childish, he entered into with the greatest delight and enthusiasm. Among other peculiarities, he had become deeply imbued with a thirst for scientific knowledge, ever since he had acquired, with infinite labour, the small modicum of science necessary to navigation; and his doings in pursuit of statistical information relative to the weather, and the phenomena of nature generally, were very peculiar, and in some cases outrageous. His transaction with the quicksilver was in consequence of an eager desire to see that metal frozen (an effect which takes place when the spirit-of-wine thermometer falls to 39 degrees below zero of Fahrenheit), and a wish to be able to boast of having actually fired a mercurial bullet through an inch plank. Having made a careful note of the fact, with all the relative circumstances attending it, in a very much blotted book, which he denominated his scientific log, the worthy skipper threw off his coat, drew a chair to the stove, and prepared to regale himself with a pipe. As he glanced slowly round the room while thus engaged, his eye fell on the mass of snow before alluded to. On being informed by the doctor for what it was intended, he laid down his pipe and rose hastily from his chair.

"You've not a moment to loose," said he. "As I came in at the gate just now, I saw Hamilton coming down the river on the ice, and he must be almost arrived now."

"Up with it then," cried the doctor, seizing the snow, and lifting it to the top of the door. "Hand me those bits of stick, Harry; quick, man, stir your stumps.—Now then, skipper, fix them in so, while I hold this up."

The skipper lent willing and effective aid, so that in a few minutes the snow was placed in such a position that upon the opening of the door it must inevitably fall on the head of the first person who should enter the room.

"So," said the skipper; "that's rigged up in what I call a ship-shape fashion."

"True," remarked the doctor, eyeing the arrangement with a look of approval; "it will do, I think, admirably."

"Don't you think, skipper," said Harry Somerville gravely, as he resumed his seat in front of the fire, "that it would be worth while to make a careful and minute entry in your private log of the manner in which it was put up, to be afterwards followed by an account of its effect? You might write an essay on it now, and call it the extraordinary effects of a fall of snow in latitude so and so, eh? What think you of it?"

The skipper vouchsafed no reply, but made a significant gesture with his fist, which caused Harry to put himself in a posture of defence.

At this moment footsteps were heard on the wooden platform in front of the building.

Instantly all became silence and expectation in the hall as the result of the practical joke was about to be realised. Just then another step was heard on the platform, and it became evident that two persons were approaching the door.

"Hope it'll be the right man," said the skipper, with a look savouring slightly of anxiety.

As he spoke the door opened, and a foot crossed the threshold; the next instant the miniature avalanche descended on the head and shoulders of a man, who reeled forward from the weight of the blow, and, covered from head to foot with snow, fell to the ground amid shouts of laughter.

With a convulsive stamp and shake, the prostrate figure sprang up and confronted the party. Had the cast-iron stove suddenly burst into atoms, and blown the roof off the house, it could scarcely have created greater consternation than that which filled the merry jesters when they beheld the visage of Mr. Rogan, the superintendent of the fort, red with passion and fringed with snow.

"So," said he, stamping violently with his foot, partly from anger, and partly with the view of shaking off the unexpected covering, which stuck all over his dress in little patches, producing a somewhat piebald effect,—*"so you are pleased to jest, gentlemen. Pray, who placed that piece of snow over the door?"* Mr. Rogan glared fiercely round upon the culprits, who stood speechless before him.

For a moment he stood silent, as if uncertain how to act; then turning short on his heel, he strode quickly out of the room, nearly overturning Mr. Hamilton, who at the same instant entered it, carrying his gun and snow-shoes under his arm.

"Dear me, what has happened?" he exclaimed, in a peculiarly gentle tone of voice, at the same time regarding the snow and the horror-stricken circle with a look of intense surprise.

"You see what has happened," replied Harry Somerville, who was the first to recover his composure; "I presume you intended to ask, 'What has *caused* it to happen?' Perhaps the skipper will explain; it's beyond me, quite."

Thus appealed to, that worthy cleared his throat, and said,—

"Why, you see, Mr. Hamilton, a great phenomenon of meteorology has happened. We were all standing, you must know, at the open door, taking a squint at the weather, when our attention was attracted

by a curious object that appeared in the sky, and seemed to be coming down at the rate of ten knots an hour, right end-on for the house. I had just time to cry, 'Clear out, lads,' when it came slap in through the doorway, and smashed to shivers there, where you see the fragments. In fact, it's a wonderful *aërolite*, and Mr. Rogan has just gone out with a lot of the bits in his pocket, to make a careful examination of them, and draw up a report for the Geological Society in London. I shouldn't wonder if he were to send off an express to-night; and maybe you will have to convey the news to headquarters, so you'd better go and see him about it soon."

Soft although Mr. Hamilton was supposed to be, he was not quite prepared to give credit to this explanation; but being of a peaceful disposition, and altogether unaccustomed to retort, he merely smiled his disbelief, as he proceeded to lay aside his fowling-piece, and divest himself of the voluminous out-of-door trappings with which he was clad. Mr. Hamilton was a tall, slender youth, of about nineteen. He had come out by the ship in autumn, and was spending his first winter at York Fort. Up to the period of his entering the Hudson's Bay Company's service, he had never been more than twenty miles from home, and having mingled little with the world, was somewhat unsophisticated, besides being by nature gentle and unassuming.

Soon after this the man who acted as cook, waiter, and butler to the mess, entered, and said that Mr. Rogan desired to see the accountant immediately.

"Who am I say did it?" inquired that gentleman, as he arose to obey the summons.

"Wouldn't it be a disinterested piece of kindness if you were to say it was yourself?" suggested the doctor.

"Perhaps it would, but I won't," replied the accountant, as he made his exit.

In about half-an-hour Mr. Rogan and the accountant re-entered the apartment. The former had quite regained his composure. He was naturally amiable; which happy disposition was indicated by a habitually cheerful look and smile.

"Now, gentlemen," said he "I find that this practical joke was not intended for me, and therefore look upon it as an unlucky accident; but I cannot too strongly express my dislike to practical jokes of all kinds. I have seen great evil, and some bloodshed, result from practical jokes; and I think that, being a sufferer in consequence of your fondness for them, I have a right to beg that you will abstain from such doings in future—at least from such jokes as involve risk to those who do not choose to enter into them."

Having given vent to this speech, Mr. Rogan left his volatile friends to digest it at their leisure.

"Serves us right," said the skipper pacing up and down the room in a repentant frame of mind, with his thumbs hooked into the arm-holes of his vest.

The doctor said nothing, but breathed hard and smoked vigorously.

While we admit most thoroughly with Mr. Rogan that practical jokes are exceedingly bad, and productive frequently of far more evil than fun, we feel it our duty, as a faithful delineator of manners, customs, and character in these regions, to urge in palliation of the of the offence committed by the young gentlemen at York Fort, that

they had really about as few amusements and sources of excitement as fall to the lot of any class of men. They were entirely dependent on their own unaided exertions, during eight or nine months of the year, for amusement or recreation of any kind. Their books were few in number, and soon read through. The desolate wilderness around afforded no incidents to form subjects of conversation further than the events of a day's shooting, which, being nearly similar every day, soon lost all interest. No newspapers came to tell of the doings of the busy world from which they were shut out and nothing occurred to vary the dull routine of their life; so that it is not matter for wonder that they were driven to seek for relaxation and excitement occasionally in most outrageous and unnatural ways, and to indulge now and then in the perpetration of a practical joke.

For some time after the rebuke administered by Mr. Rogan, silence reigned in *Bachelors' Hall*, as the clerks' house was termed. But at length symptoms of *ennui* began to be displayed. The doctor yawned, and lay down on his bed to enjoy an American newspaper about twelve months old. Harry Somerville sat down to reread a volume of Franklin's travels in the polar regions, which he had perused twice already. Mr. Hamilton busied himself in cleaning his fowling-piece; while the skipper conversed with Mr. Wilson, who was engaged in his room in adjusting an ivory head to a walking-stick. Mr. Wilson was a jack-of-all-trades, who could make shift, one way or other, to do *anything*. The accountant paced the uncarpeted floor in deep contemplation.

At length he paused, and looked at Harry Somerville for some time.

"What say you to a walk through the woods to North River, Harry?"

"Ready," cried Harry, tossing down the book with a look of contempt—"ready for anything."

"Will *you* come, Hamilton?" added the accountant. Hamilton looked up in surprise.

"You don't mean, surely, to take so long a walk in the dark, do you? It is snowing, too, very heavily, and I think you said that North River was five miles off, did you not?"

"Of course I mean to walk in the dark," replied the accountant, unless you can extemporize an artificial light for the occasion, or prevail on the moon to come out for my special benefit. As to snowing and a short tramp of five miles, why, the sooner you get to think of such things as *trifles* the better, if you hope to be fit for anything in this country."

"I *don't* think much of them," replied Hamilton, softly and with a slight smile; I only meant that such a walk was not very *attractive* so late in the evening."

"Attractive!" shouted Harry Somerville from his bedroom, where he was equipping himself for the walk; "what can be more attractive than a sharp run of ten miles through the woods on a cool night to visit your traps, with the prospect of a silver fox or a wolf at the end of it, and an extra sound sleep as the result? Come, man, don't be soft; get ready, and go along with us."

"Besides," added the accountant, "I don't mean to come back to-night. To-morrow, you know, is a holiday, so we can camp out in the snow after visiting the traps, have our supper, and start early in the morning to search for ptarmigan."

"Well, I will go," said Hamilton, after this account of the pleasures that were to be expected; "I am exceedingly anxious to learn to shoot birds on the wing."

"Bless me! have you not learned that yet?" asked the doctor, in affected surprise, as he sauntered out of his bedroom to relight his pipe.

The various bedrooms in the clerks' house were ranged round the hall, having doors that opened directly into it, so that conversation carried on in a loud voice was heard in all the rooms at once, and was not unfrequently sustained in elevated tones from different apartments, when the occupants were lounging, as they often did of an evening, in their beds.

"No," said Hamilton, in reply to the doctor's question, "I have not learned yet, although there were a great many grouse in the part of Scotland where I was brought up. But my aunt, with whom I lived, was so fearful of my shooting either myself or some one else, and had such an aversion to firearms, that I determined to make her mind easy, by promising that I would never use them so long as I remained under her roof."

"Quite right; very dutiful and proper," said the doctor, with a grave patronizing air.

"Perhaps you'll fall in with more fox tracks of the same sort as the one you gave chase to this morning," shouted the skipper, from Wilson's room.

"Oh! there's hundreds of them out there," said the accountant; "so let's off at once."

The trio now proceeded to equip themselves for the walk. Their costumes were peculiar, and merit description. As they were similar in the chief points, it will suffice to describe that of our friend Harry.

On his head he wore a fur cap made of otter-skin, with a flap on each side to cover the ears, the frost being so intense in these climates that without some such protection they would inevitably freeze and fall off.

As the nose is constantly in use for the purposes of respiration, it is always left uncovered to fight with the cold as it best can; but it is a hard battle, and there is no doubt that, if it were possible, a nasal covering would be extremely pleasant. Indeed, several desperate efforts have been made to construct some sort of nose-bag, but hitherto without success, owing to the uncomfortable fact that the breath issuing from that organ immediately freezes, and converts the covering into a bag of snow or ice, which is not agreeable. Round his neck Harry wound a thick shawl of such portentous dimensions that it entirely enveloped the neck and lower part of the face; thus the entire head was, as it were, eclipsed—the eyes, the nose, and the cheek-bones alone being visible. He then threw on a coat made of deer-skin, so prepared that it bore a slight resemblance to excessively coarse chamois leather. It was somewhat in the form of a long, wide surtout, overlapping very much in front, and confined closely to the figure by means of a scarlet worsted belt instead of buttons, and was ornamented round the foot by a number of cuts, which produced a fringe of little tails. Being lined with thick flannel, this portion of attire was rather heavy, but extremely necessary. A pair of blue cloth leggings, having a loose flap on the outside, were next drawn on over the trousers, as an additional protection to the knees. The feet,

besides being portions of the body that are peculiarly susceptible of cold, had further to contend against the chafing of the lines which attach them to the snow-shoes, so that special care in their preparation for duty was necessary. First were put on a pair of blanketing or duffel socks, which were merely oblong in form, without sewing or making-up of any kind. These were wrapped round the feet, which were next thrust into a pair of made-up socks, of the same material, having ankle-pieces; above these were put *another* pair, *without* flaps for the ankles. Over all was drawn a pair of moccasins made of stout deer-skin, similar to that of the coat. Of course, the elegance of Harry's feet was entirely destroyed, and had he been met in this guise by any of his friends in the "old country," they would infallibly have come to the conclusion that he was afflicted with gout. Over his shoulders he slung a powder-horn and shot-pouch, the latter tastefully embroidered with dyed quill-work. A pair of deer-skin mittens, having a little bag for the thumb, and a large bag for the fingers, completed his costume.

While the three were making ready, with a running accompaniment of grunts and groans at refractory pieces of apparel, the night without became darker, and the snow fell thicker, so that when they issued suddenly out of their warm abode, and emerged into the sharp frosty air, which blew the snow-drift into their eyes, they felt a momentary desire to give up the project and return to their comfortable quarters.

"What a dismal-looking night it is!" said the accountant, as he led the way along the wooden platform towards the gate of the fort.

"Very!" replied Hamilton, with an involuntary shudder.

"Keep up your heart," said Harry, in a cheerful voice; "you've no notion how your mind will change on that point when you have walked a mile or so and got into a comfortable heat. I must confess, however, that a little moonshine would be an improvement," he added, on stumbling, for the third time, off the platform into the deep snow.

"It is full moon just now," said the accountant, "and I think the clouds look as if they would break soon. At any rate, I've been at North River so often that I believe I could walk out there blind-fold."

As he spoke they passed the gate, and diverging to the right, proceeded, as well as the imperfect light permitted, along the footpath that led to the forest.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The walk continued—Frozen toes—An encampment in the snow.

AFTER quitting York Fort, the three friends followed the track leading to the spot where the winter's firewood was cut. Snow was still falling thickly, and it was with some difficulty that the accountant kept in the right direction. The night was excessively dark, while the dense fir forest, through which the narrow road ran, rendered the gloom if possible more intense.

When they had proceeded about a mile, their leader suddenly came to a stand.

"We must quit the track now," said he; "so get on your snow-shoes as fast as you can."

Hitherto they had carried their snow-shoes under their arms, as the beaten track along which they travelled rendered them unnecessary; but now, having to leave the path and pursue the remainder of their journey through deep snow, they availed themselves of those useful machines, by means of which the inhabitants of this part of North America are enabled to journey over many miles of trackless wilderness, with nearly as much ease as a sportsman can traverse the moors in autumn, and that over snow so deep that one hour's walk through it *without* such aids would completely exhaust the stoutest trapper, and advance him only a mile or so on his journey. In other words, to walk without snow-shoes would be utterly impossible, while to walk with them is easy and agreeable. They are not used after the manner of skates, with a *sliding*, but a *stepping* action, and their sole use is to support the wearer on the top of snow, into which without them he would sink up to the waist. When we say that they support the wearer on the *top* of the snow, of course we do not mean that they literally do not break the surface at all. But the depth to which they sink is comparatively trifling, and varies according to the state of the snow and the season of the year. In the woods they sink frequently about six inches, sometimes more, sometimes less, while on frozen rivers, where the snow is packed solid by the action of the wind, they sink only two or three inches, and sometimes so little as to render it preferable to walk without them altogether. Snow-shoes are made of a light, strong framework of wood, varying from three to six feet long by eighteen and twenty inches broad, tapering to a point before and behind, and turning up in front. Different tribes of Indians modify the form a little, but in all essential points they are the same. The framework is filled up with a netting of deer-skin threads, which unites lightness with great strength, and permits any snow that may chance to fall upon the netting to pass through it like a sieve.

On the present occasion, the snow, having recently fallen, was soft, and the walking, consequently, what is called heavy.

"Come on," shouted the accountant, as he came to a stand for the third time within half-an-hour, to await the coming up of poor Hamilton, who, being rather awkward in snow-shoe walking even in daylight, found it nearly impossible in the dark.

"Wait a little, please," replied a faint voice in the distance; "I've got among a quantity of willows, and find it very difficult to get on. I've been down twice al—"

The sudden cessation of the voice, and a loud crash as of breaking branches, proved too clearly that our friend had accomplished his third fall.

"There he goes again," exclaimed Harry Somerville, who came up at the moment. "I've helped him up once already. We'll never get to North River at this rate. What is to be done?"

"Let's see what has become of him this time, however," said the accountant, as he began to retrace his steps. "If I mistake not, he made rather a heavy plunge that time, judging from the sound.

At that moment the clouds overhead broke, and a moonbeam shot down into the forest, throwing a pale light over the cold scene. A few steps brought Harry and the accountant to the spot whence the

sound had proceeded, and a loud startling laugh rang through the night air, as the latter suddenly beheld poor Hamilton struggling, with his arms, head, and shoulders stuck into the snow, his snow-shoes twisted and sticking with the heels up and awry, in a sort of rampant confusion, and his gun buried to the locks beside him. Regaining one's perpendicular after a fall in deep snow, when the feet are encumbered by a pair of long snow-shoes, is by no means an easy thing to accomplish, in consequence of the impossibility of getting hold of anything solid on which to rest the hands. The depth is so great that the outstretched arms cannot find bottom, and every successive struggle only sinks the unhappy victim deeper down. Should no assistance be near, he will soon beat the snow to a solidity that will enable him to rise, but not in a very enviable or comfortable condition.

"Give me a hand, Harry," gasped Hamilton, as he managed to twist his head upwards for a moment.

"Here you are," cried Harry, holding out his hand and endeavouring to suppress his desire to laugh; "up with you," and in another moment the poor youth was upon his legs, with every fold and crevice about his person stuffed to repletion with snow.

"Come, cheer up," cried the accountant, giving the youth a slap on the back; "there's nothing like experience—the proverb says that it even teaches fools, so you need not despair."

Hamilton smiled as he endeavoured to shake off some of his white coating.

"We'll be all right immediately," added Harry; "I see that the country ahead is more open, so the walking will be easier."

"Oh, I wish that I had not come!" said Hamilton, sorrowfully, "because I am only detaining you. But perhaps I shall do better as we get on. At any rate I cannot go back now, as I could never find the way."

"Go back! of course not," said the accountant; "in a short time we shall get into the old woodcutters' track of last year, and although it's not beaten at all, yet it is pretty level and open, so that we shall get on famously."

"Go on, then," sighed Hamilton.

"Drive ahead," laughed Harry, and without further delay they resumed their march, which was soon rendered more cheerful as the clouds rolled away, the snow ceased to fall, and the bright, full moon poured its rays down upon their path.

For a long time they proceeded in silence, the muffled sound of the snow, as it sank beneath their regular footsteps, being the only interruption to the universal stillness around. There is something very solemnizing in a scene such as we are now describing—the calm tranquillity of the arctic night; the pure whiteness of the snowy carpet, which rendered the dark firs inky black by contrast; the clear, cold starry sky, that glimmered behind the dark clouds, whose heavy masses, now rolling across the moon, partially obscured the landscape, and anon, passing slowly away, let a flood of light down upon the forest, which, penetrating between the thick branches, scattered the surface of the snow, as it were, with flakes of silver. Sleep has often been applied as a simile to nature in repose, but in this case death seemed more appropriate. So silent, so cold, so still was the scene, that it filled the mind with an indefinable feeling of

dread, as if there was some mysterious danger near. Once or twice during their walk the three travellers paused to rest, but they spoke little, and in subdued voices, as if they feared to break the silence of the night.

"It is strange," said Harry, in a low tone, as he walked beside Hamilton, "that such a scene as this always makes me think more than usual of home."

"And yet it is natural," replied the other, "because it reminds us more forcibly than any other that we are in a foreign land—in the lonely wilderness—far away from home."

Both Harry and Hamilton had been trained in families where the Almighty was feared and loved, and where their minds had been early led to reflect upon the Creator when regarding the works of his hand: their thoughts, therefore, naturally reverted to another home, compared with which this world is indeed a cold, lonely wilderness; but on such subjects they feared to converse, partly from a dread of the ridicule of reckless companions, partly from ignorance of each other's feelings on religious matters, and although their minds were busy their tongues were silent.

The ground over which the greater part of their path lay was a swamp, which, being now frozen, was a beautiful white plain, so that their advance was more rapid, until they approached the belt of woodland that skirts North River. Here they again encountered the heavy snow, which had been such a source of difficulty to Hamilton at setting out. He had profited by his former experience, however, and by the exercise of an excessive degree of caution managed to scramble through the woods tolerably well, emerging at last, along with his companions, on the bleak margin of what appeared to be the frozen sea.

North River, at this place, is several miles broad, and the opposite shore is so low that the snow causes it to appear but a slight undulation of the frozen bed of the river. Indeed, it would not be distinguishable at all, were it not for the willow bushes and dwarf pines, whose tops, rising above the white garb, of winter, indicate that *terra firma* lies below.

"What a cold, desolate-looking place!" said Hamilton, as the party stood still to recover breath before taking their way over the plain to the spot where the accountant's traps were set. "It looks more like the frozen sea than a river."

"It can scarcely be called a river at this place," remarked the accountant, "seeing that the water hereabouts is brackish, and the tides ebb and flow a good way up. In fact, this is the extreme mouth of North River, and if you turn your eyes a little to the right, towards yonder ice-hummock in the plain, you behold the frozen sea itself."

"Where are your traps set?" inquired Harry.

"Down in the hollow, behind yon point covered with burshwood."

"Oh, we shall soon get to them, then; come along," cried Harry.

Harry was mistaken, however. He had not yet learned by experience the extreme difficulty of judging of distance in the uncertain light of night—a difficulty that was increased by his ignorance of the locality, and by the gleams of moonshine that shot through the driving clouds, and threw confused, fantastic shadows over the plain. The point which he had at first supposed was covered with low bushes, and about a hundred yards off, proved to

be clad in reality with large bushes and small trees, and lay at a distance of two miles.

"I think you have been mistaken in supposing the point so near, Harry," said Hamilton, as he trudged on beside his friend.

"A fact evident to the naked eye," replied Harry. "How do your feet stand it, eh? Beginning to lose bark yet?"

Hamilton did not feel quite sure. "I think," said he, softly, "that there is a blister under the big toe of my left foot. It feels very painful."

"If you feel at all *uncertain* about it, you may rest assured that there *is* a blister. These things don't give much pain at first. I'm sorry to tell you, my dear fellow, that you'll be painfully aware of the fact to-morrow. However, don't distress yourself; it's a part of the experience that every one goes through in this country. Besides," said Harry smiling, "we can send to the fort for medical advice."

"Don't bother the poor fellow, and hold your tongue, Harry," said the accountant, who now began to tread more cautiously as he approached the place where the traps were set.

"How many traps have you?" inquired Harry, in a low tone.

"Three," replied the accountant.

"Do you know I have a very strange feeling about my heels—or rather a want of feeling," said Hamilton, smiling dubiously.

"A want of feeling! what do you mean?" cried the accountant, stopping suddenly and confronting his young friend.

"Oh, I daresay it's nothing," he exclaimed, looking as if ashamed of having spoken of it; "only I feel exactly as if both my heels were cut off, and I were walking on tip-toe!"

"Say you so? then right about wheel. Your heels are frozen, man, and you'll lose them if you don't look sharp."

"Frozen!" cried Hamilton, with a look of incredulity.

"Ay, frozen; and it's lucky you told me. I've a place up in the woods here, which I call my winter camp, where we can get you put to rights. But step out; the longer we are about it the worse for you."

Harry Somerville was at first disposed to think that the accountant jested, but seeing that he turned his back towards his traps, and made for the nearest point of the thick woods with a stride that betokened thorough sincerity, he became anxious too, and followed as fast as possible.

The place to which the accountant led his young friends was a group of fir trees which grew on a little knoll, that rose a few feet above the surrounding level country. At the foot of this hillock a small rivulet or burn ran in summer, but the only evidence of its presence now was the absence of willow bushes all along its covered narrow bed. A level tract was thus formed by nature, free from all underwood, and running inland about the distance of a mile, where it was lost in the swamp whence the stream issued. The wooded knoll or hillock lay at the mouth of this brook, and being the only elevated spot in the neighbourhood, besides having the largest trees growing on it, had been selected by the accountant as a convenient place for "camping out" on, when he visited his traps in winter, and happened to be either too late or disinclined to return home. Moreover, the spreading fir branches afforded an excellent shelter alike from wind and snow in the centre of the clump, while from the margin

was obtained a partial view of the river and the sea beyond. Indeed, from this look-out there was a very fine prospect on clear winter nights of the white landscape, enlivened occasionally by groups of arctic foxes, which might be seen scampering about in sport, and gambolling among the hummocks of ice like young kittens.

"Now we shall turn up here," said the accountant, as he walked a short way up the brook before mentioned, and halted in front of what appeared to be an impenetrable mass of bushes.

"We shall have to cut our way then," said Harry, looking to the right and left, in the vain hope of discovering a place where, the bushes being less dense, they might effect an entrance into the knoll or grove.

"Not so. I have taken care to make a passage into my winter camp, although it was only a whim, after all, to make a concealed entrance, seeing that no one ever passes this way except wolves and foxes, whose noses render the use of their eyes in most cases unnecessary."

So saying, the accountant turned aside a thick branch, and disclosed a narrow track, into which he entered, followed by his two companions.

A few minutes brought them to the centre of the knoll. Here they found a clear space of about twenty feet in diameter, around which the trees circled so thickly that in daylight nothing could be seen but tree-stems as far as the eye could penetrate, while overhead the broad flat branches of the fir, with their evergreen verdure, spread out and enterlaced so thickly that very little light penetrated into the space below. Of course at night, even in moonlight, the place was pitch dark. Into this retreat the accountant led his companions, and bidding them stand still for a minute lest they should tumble into the fireplace, he proceeded to strike a light.

Those who have never travelled in the wild-parts of this world can form but a faint conception of the extraordinary and sudden change that is produced, not only in the scene, but in the mind of the beholder, when a blazing fire is lighted in a dark night. Before the fire is kindled, and you stand perhaps, (as Harry and his friend did on the present occasion) shivering in the cold, the heart sinks, and sad, gloomy thoughts arise, while your eye endeavours to pierce the thick darkness, which, if it succeed in doing so, only adds to the effect by disclosing the pallid snow, the cold, chilling beams of the moon, the wild vistas of savage scenery, the awe-inspiring solitudes that tell of your insulated condition, or stir up the sad memories of other and far-distant scenes. But the moment the first spark of fire sends a fitful gleam of light upwards, these thoughts and feelings take wing and vanish. The indistinct scenery is rendered utterly invisible by the red light, which attracts and rivets the eye as if by a species of fascination. The deep shadows of the woods immediately around you grow deeper and blacker as the flames leap and sparkle upwards, causing the stems of the surrounding trees and the foliage of the overhanging branches to stand out in bold relief, bathed in a ruddy glow, which converts the forest chamber into a snug *home-like* place, and fills the mind with agreeable *home-like* feelings and meditations. It seems as if the spirit in the one case were set loose and etherealized to enable it to spread itself over the plains of cold cheerless, illimitable space, and left to dwell upon objects too

wide to grasp, too indistinct to comprehend ; while in the other, it is recalled and concentrated upon matters circumscribed and congenial, things of which it has long been cognizant, and which it can appreciate and enjoy without the effort of a thought.

Some such thoughts and feelings passed rapidly through the minds of Harry and Hamilton, while the accountant struck a light and kindled a roaring fire of logs, which he had cut and arranged there on a previous occasion. In the middle of the space thus brilliantly illuminated, the snow had been cleared away till the moss was uncovered, thus leaving a hole of about ten feet in diameter. As the snow was quite four feet deep, the whole was surrounded with a pure white wall, whose height was further increased by the masses thrown out in the process of digging to nearly six feet. At one end of this space was the large fire which had just been kindled, and which, owing to the intense cold, only melted a very little of the snow in its immediate neighbourhood. At the other end lay a mass of flat pine branches, which were piled up so thickly as to form a pleasant elastic couch, the upper end being slightly raised so as to form a kind of bolster while the lower extended almost into the fire. Indeed, the branches at the extremity were burned quite brown, and some of them charred. Beside the bolster lay a small wooden box, a round tin kettle, an iron tea-kettle, two tin mugs, a hatchet, and a large bundle tied up in a green blanket. There were thus, as it were, two apartments, one within the other—namely, the outer one, whose walls were formed of tree-stems and thick darkness, and the ceiling of green boughs ; and then the inner one, with walls of snow, that sparkled in the firelight as if set with precious stones, and a carpet of evergreen branches.

Within this latter our three friends were soon actively employed. Poor Hamilton's moccasins were speedily removed, and his friends, going down on their knees, began to rub his feet with a degree of energy that induced him to beg for mercy.

"Mercy !" exclaimed the accountant, without pausing for an instant ; "faith, it's little mercy there would be in stopping just now.—Rub away, Harry. Don't give in. They're coming right at last."

After a very severe rubbing, the heels began to show symptoms of returning vitality. They were then wrapped up in the folds of a thick blanket, and held sufficiently near to the fire to prevent any chance of the frost getting at them again.

"Now, my boy," said the accountant, as he sat down to enjoy a pipe and rest himself on a blanket, which, along with the one wrapped round Hamilton's feet, had been extracted from the green bundle before mentioned—"now, my boy, you'll have to enjoy yourself here as you best can for an hour or two, while Harry and I visit the traps. Would you like supper before we go, or shall we have it on our return ?"

"Oh, I'll wait for it by all means till you return. I don't feel a bit hungry just now, and it will be much more cheerful to have it after all your work is over. Besides, I feel my feet too painful to enjoy it just now."

"My poor fellow," said Harry, whose heart smote him for having been disposed at first to treat the thing lightly, "I'm really sorry for you. Would you not like me to stay with you ?"

"By no means," replied Hamilton quickly. "You can do nothing more for me, Harry; and I should be very sorry if you missed seeing the traps."

"Oh, never mind the traps. I've seen traps, and set them too, fifty times before now. I'll stop with you, old boy, I will," said Harry doggedly, while he made arrangements to settle down for the evening.

"Well, if *you* won't go, I will," said Hamilton coolly, as he unwound the blanket from his feet and began to pull on his socks.

"Bravo, my lad!" exclaimed the accountant, patting him approvingly on the back; "I didn't think you had half so much pluck in you. But it won't do, old fellow. You're in *my* castle just now, and must obey orders. You couldn't walk half-a-mile for your life; so just be pleased to pull off your socks again. Besides, I want Harry to help me to carry up my foxes, if there are any;—so get ready, sirrah!"

"Ay, ay, captain," cried Harry, with a laugh, while he sprang up and put on his snow-shoes.

"You needn't bring your gun," said the accountant, shaking the ashes from his pipe as he prepared to depart, "but you may as well shove that axe into your belt; you may want it.—Now, mind, don't roast your feet," he added, turning to Hamilton.

"Adieu!" cried Harry, with a nod and a smile, as he turned to go.

"Take care the bears don't find you out."

"No fear. Good-bye, Harry," replied Hamilton, as his two friends disappeared in the wood and left him to his solitary meditations.

CHAPTER XIX

Shows how the accountant and Harry set their traps, and what came of it.

THE moon was still up and the sky less overcast, when our amateur trappers quitted the encampment, and, descending to the mouth of the little brook, took their way over North River in the direction of the accountant's traps. Being somewhat fatigued both in mind and body by the unusual exertions of the night, neither of them spoke for some time, but continued to walk in silence, contemplatively gazing at their long shadows.

"Did you ever trap a fox, Harry?" said the accountant at length.

"Yes, I used to set traps at Red River; but the foxes there are not numerous, and are so closely watched by the dogs that they have become suspicious. I caught but few."

"Then you know how to *set* a trap?"

"Oh yes; I've set both steel and snow traps often. You've heard of old Labonté, who used to carry one of the winter-packets from Red River until within a few years back?"

"Yes, I've heard of him; his name is in my ledger—at least if you mean Pierre Labonté, who came down last fall with the brigade."

"The same. Well, he was a great friend of mine. His little cabin lay about two miles from Fort Garry, and after work was over in the office I used to go down to sit and chat with him by the fire, and many a time I have sat up half the night listening to him as he recounted his adventures. The old man never tired of relating them and of smoking twist tobacco. Among other things, he set my mind upon trapping, by giving me an account of an expedition he made,

when quite a youth, to the Rocky Mountains ; so I got him to go into the woods and teach me how to set traps and snares, and I flatter myself he found me an apt pupil."

"Humph !" ejaculated the accountant ; " I have no doubt you do flatter yourself. But here we are. The traps are just beyond that mound ; so look out and don't stick your feet into them."

"Hist !" exclaimed Harry, laying his hand suddenly on his companion's arm. "Do you see *that*?" pointing towards the place where the traps were said to be.

"You have sharp eyes, younker. I *do* see it, now that you point it out. It's a fox, and caught, too, as I'm a scrivener."

"You're in luck to-night," exclaimed Harry eagerly. "It's a *silver* fox. I see the white tip on its tail."

"Nonsense," cried the accountant, hastening forward ; "but we'll soon settle the point."

Harry proved to be right. On reaching the spot they found a beautiful black fox, caught by the fore leg in a steel trap, and gazing at them with a look of terror.

The skin of the silver fox—so called from a slight sprinkling of pure white hairs covering its otherwise jet-black body—is the most valuable fur obtained by the fur-traders, and fetches an enormous price in the British market, so much as thirty pounds sterling being frequently obtained for a single skin. The foxes vary in colour from jet black, which is the most valuable, to a light silvery hue, and are hailed as great prizes by the Indians and trappers when they are so fortunate as to catch them. They are not numerous, however, and being exceedingly wary and suspicious, are difficult to catch. It may be supposed, therefore, that our friend the accountant ran to secure his prize with some eagerness.

"Now then, my beauty, don't shrink," he said, as the poor fox backed at his approach as far as the chain, which fastened the trap to a log of wood, would permit, and then, standing at bay, showed a formidable row of teeth. That grin was its last ; another moment, and the handle of the accountant's axe stretched it lifeless on the snow.

"Isn't it a beauty !" cried he, surveying the animal with a look of triumphant pleasure ; and then feeling as if he had compromised his dignity a little by betraying so much glee, he added, "But come now, Harry ; we must see to the other traps. It's getting late."

The others were soon visited ; but no more foxes were caught. However, the accountant set them both off to see that all was right ; and then readjusting one himself, told Harry to set the other, in order to clear himself of the charge of boasting.

Harry, nothing loath, went down on his knees to do so.

The steel trap used for catching foxes is of exactly the same form as the ordinary rat-trap, with this difference, that it has two springs instead of one, is considerably larger, and has no teeth, as these latter would only tend to spoil the skin. Owing to the strength of the springs, a pretty strong effort is required to set the trap, and clumsy fellows frequently catch the tails of their coats or the ends of their belts, and not unfrequently the ends of their fingers, in their awkward attempts. Having set it without any of the above untoward accidents occurring, Harry placed it gently on a hole which he had previously scraped—placing it in such a manner that the jaws and plate, or trigger, were a hair-breadth below the level of the snow.

After this he spread over it a very thin sheet of paper, observing as he did so that hay or grass was preferable; but as there was none at hand, paper would do. Over this he sprinkled snow very lightly, until every vestige of the trap was concealed from view, and the whole was made quite level with the surrounding plain, so that even the accountant himself, after he had once removed his eyes from it, could not tell where it lay. Some chips of a frozen ptarmigan were then scattered around the spot, and a piece of wood left to mark its whereabouts. The bait is always scattered *round* and not *on* the trap as the fox, in running from one piece to another, is almost certain to set his foot on it, and so get caught by the leg; whereas, were the bait placed *upon* the trap, the fox would be apt to get caught, while in the act of eating, by the snout which, being wedge-like in form, is easily dragged out of its gripe.

"Now then, what say you to going farther out on the river, and making a snow trap for white foxes?" said the accountant. "We shall still have time to do so before the moon sets."

"Agreed," cried Harry. "Come along."

Without further parley they left the spot and stretched out towards the sea.

The snow on the river was quite hard on its surface, so that snowshoes being unnecessary, they carried them over their shoulders, and advanced much more rapidly. It is true that their road was a good deal broken, and jagged pieces of ice protruded their sharp corners so as to render a little attention necessary in walking; but one or two severe bumps on their toes made our friends sensitively alive to these minor dangers of the way.

"There goes a pack of them!" exclaimed Harry, as a troop of white foxes scampered past, gambolling as they went, and, coming suddenly to a halt at a short distance, wheeled about and sat down on their haunches, apparently resolved to have a good look at the strangers who dared to venture into their wild domain.

"Oh, they are the most stupid brutes alive," said the accountant, as he regarded the pack with a look of contempt. "I've seen one of them sit down and look at me while I set a trap right before his eyes; and I had not got a hundred yards from the spot when a yell informed me that the gentleman's curiosity had led him to put his foot right into it."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Harry. "I had no idea that they were so tame. Certainly no other kind of fox would do that."

"No, that's certain. But these fellows have done it to me again and again. I shouldn't wonder if we got one to-night in the very same way. I'm sure, by the look of these rascals, that they would do anything of a reckless, stupid nature just now."

"Had we not better make our trap here, then? There is a point, not fifty yards off, with trees on it large enough for our purpose."

"Yes; it will do very well here. Now, then, to work. Go to the wood, Harry, and fetch a log or two, while I cut out the slabs." So saying, the accountant drew the axe which he always carried in his belt; and while Harry entered the wood and began to hew off the branch of a tree, he proceeded, as he said, to "cut out the slabs." With the point of his knife he first of all marked out an oblong in the snow, then cut down three or four inches with the axe, and putting the handle under the cut, after the manner of a lever, detached a

thick solid slab of about three inches thick, which, although not so hard as ice, was quite hard enough for the purpose for which it was intended. He then cut two similar slabs, and a smaller one, the same in thickness and breadth, but only half the length. Having accomplished this, he raised himself to rest a little, and observed that Harry approached, staggering under a load of wood, and that the foxes were still sitting on their haunches, gazing at him with a look of deep interest.

"If I only had my gun here!" thought he. But not having it, he merely shook his fist at them, stooped down again and resumed his work. With Harry's assistance the slabs were placed in such a way as to form a sort of box or house, having one end of it open. This was further plastered with soft snow at the joinings, and banked up in such a way that no animal could break into it easily—at least such an attempt would be so difficult as to make an entrance into the interior by the open side much more probable. When this was finished, they took the logs that Harry had cut and carried with so much difficulty from the wood, and began to lop off the smaller branches and twigs. One large log was placed across the opening of the trap, while the others were piled on one end of it so as to press it down with their weight. Three small pieces of stick were now prepared—two of them being about half a foot long, and the other about a foot. On the long piece of stick the breast of a ptarmigan was fixed as a bait, and two notches cut, the one at the end of it, the other about four or five inches further down. All was now ready to set the trap.

"Raise the log now while I place the trigger," said Harry, kneeling down in front of the door, while the accountant, as directed, lifted up the log on which the others lay so as to allow his companion to introduce the bait-stick, in such a manner as to support it, while the slightest pull on the bait would set the stick with the notches free, and thus permit the log to fall on the back of the fox, whose effort to reach the bait would necessarily place him under it.

While Harry was thus engaged, the accountant stood up and looked towards the foxes. They had approached so near in their curiosity, that he was induced to throw his axe frantically at the foremost of the pack. This set them galloping off, but they soon halted and sat down as before.

"What aggravating brutes they are, to be sure!" said Harry, with a laugh, as his companion returned with the hatchet.

"Humph! yes, but we'll be upsides with them yet. Come along into the wood, and I wager that in ten minutes we shall have one."

They immediately hurried towards the wood, but had not walked fifty paces when they were startled by a loud yell behind them.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the accountant, while he and Harry turned round with a start. "It cannot surely be possible that they have gone in already." A loud howl followed the remark, and the whole pack fled over the plain like snow-drift, and disappeared.

"Ah, that's a pity! something must have scared them to make them take wing like that. However, we'll get one to-morrow for certain; so come along, lad, let us make for the camp."

"Not so fast," replied the other: "if you hadn't pored over the big ledger till you were blind, you would see that there is *one* prisoner already."

This proved to be the case. On returning to the spot they found an arctic fox in his last gasp, lying flat on the snow, with the heavy log across his back, which seemed to be broken. A slight tap on the snout with the accountant's deadly axe-handle completed his destruction.

"We're in luck to-night," cried Harry, as he kneeled again to reset the trap. "But after all these white brutes are worth very little; I fancy a hundred of their skins would not be worth the black one you got first."

"Be quick, Harry; the moon is almost down, and poor Hamilton will think that the polar bears have got hold of us."

"All right! Now then, step out," and glancing once more at the trap to see that all was properly arranged, the two friends once more turned their faces homewards, and travelled over the snow with rapid strides.

The moon had just set, leaving the desolate scene in deep gloom, so that they could scarcely find their way to the forest; and when they did at last reach its shelter, the night became so intensely dark that they had almost to grope their way, and would certainly have lost it altogether were it not for the accountant's thorough knowledge of the locality. To add to their discomfort, as they stumbled on snow began to fall, and ere long a pretty steady breeze of wind drove it sharply in their faces. However, this mattered but little, as they penetrated deeper in among the trees, which proved a complete shelter both from wind and snow. An hour's march brought them to the mouth of the brook, although half that time would have been sufficient had it been daylight, and a few minutes later they had the satisfaction of hearing Hamilton's voice hailing them as they pushed aside the bushes and sprang into the cheerful light of their encampment.

"Hurrah!" shouted Harry, as he leaped into the space before the fire, and flung the two foxes at Hamilton's feet. "What do you think of *that*, old fellow? How are the heels? Rather sore, eh? Now for the kettle. 'Polly, put the kettle on; we'll all have—' My eye! where's the kettle, Hamilton? have you eaten it?"

"If you *compose* yourself a little, Harry, and look at the fire, you'll see it boiling there."

"Man, what a chap you are for making unnecessary speeches! Couldn't you tell me to look at the fire, without the preliminary piece of advice to *compose* myself? Besides, you talk nonsense, for I'm composed already, of blood, bones, flesh, sinews, fat, and—"

"Humbug!" interrupted the accountant. "Lend a hand to get supper, you young goose!"

"And so," continued Harry, not noticing the interruption, "I cannot be expected, nor is it necessary, to compose myself over again. But to be serious," he added, "it was very kind and considerate of you, Hammy, to put on the kettle, when your heels were in a manner uppermost."

"Oh, it was nothing at all; my heels are much better, thank you, and it kept me from wearying."

"Poor fellow!" said the accountant, while he busied himself in preparing their evening meal, you must be quite ravenous by this time—at least *I* am, which is the same thing."

Supper was soon ready. It consisted of a large kettle of tea, a

lump of pemmican, a handful of broken biscuit, and three ptarmigan, —all of which were produced from the small wooden box which the accountant was wont to call his camp-larder. The ptarmigan had been shot two weeks before, and carefully laid up for future use; the intense frost being a sufficient guarantee for their preservation for many months, had that been desired.

It would have done you good, reader (supposing you to be possessed of sympathetic feelings), to have witnessed those three nor'-westers enjoying their supper in the snowy camp. The fire had been replenished with logs, till it roared and crackled again, as if it were endued with a vicious spirit, and wished to set the very snow in flames. The walls shone like alabaster studded with diamonds, while the green boughs overhead and the stems around were of a deep red colour in the light of the fierce blaze. The tea-kettle hissed, fumed, and boiled over into the fire. A mass of pemmican simmered in the lid in front of it. Three pannikins of tea reposed on the green branches, their refreshing contents sending up little clouds of steam, while the ptarmigan, now split up, skewered, and roasted, were being heartily devoured by our three hungry friends.

The pleasures that fall to the lot of man are transient. Doubtless they are numerous and oft recurring; still they are transient, and so—supper came to an end.

"Now for a pipe," said the accountant, disposing his limbs at full length on a green blanket. "O thou precious weed, what should we do without thee!"

"Smoke tea, to be sure," answered Harry.

"Ah! true, it is possible to exist on a pipe of tea-leaves for a time, but *only* for a time. I tried it myself once, in desperation, when I ran short of tobacco on a journey, and found it execrable, but better than nothing."

"Pity we can't join you in that," remarked Harry.

"True; but perhaps since you cannot pipe, it might prove an agreeable diversification to dance."

"Thank you, I'd rather not," said Harry; "and as for Hamilton, I'm convinced that *his* mind is made up on the subject.—How go the heels now?"

"Thank you, pretty well," he replied, reclining his head on the pine branches, and extending his smitten members towards the fire. "I think they will be quite well in the morning."

"It is a curious thing," remarked the accountant, in a soliloquizing tone, "that *soft* fellows *never* smoke!"

"I beg your pardon," said Harry, "I've often seen hot loaves smoke, and they're soft enough fellows, in all conscience!"

"Ah!" sighed the accountant, that reminds me of poor Peterkin, who was *so* soft that he went by the name of 'Butter.' Did you ever hear of what he did the summer before last with an Indian's head?"

"No, never; what was it?"

"I'll tell you the story," replied the accountant, drawing a few vigorous whiffs of smoke, to prevent his pipe going out while he spoke.

As the story in question, however, depicts a new phase of society in the woods, it deserves a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER XX.

The accountant's story.

"SPRING had passed away, and York Fort was filled with all the bustle and activity of summer. Brigades came pouring in upon us with furs from the interior, and as every boat brought a C. T. or a clerk, our mess-table began to overflow.

"You've not seen the summer mess-room filled yet, Hamilton. That's a treat in store for you."

"It was pretty full last autumn, I think," suggested Hamilton, "at the time I arrived from England."

"Full! why, man, it was getting to feel quite lonely at that time. I've seen more than fifty sit down to table there, and it was worth going fifty miles to hear the row they kicked up—telling stories without end (and sometimes without foundation) about their wild doings in the interior, where every man-jack of them having spent at least eight months almost in perfect solitude, they hadn't had a chance of letting their tongues go till they came down here. But to proceed. When the ship came out in the fall, she brought a batch of new clerks, and among them was this miserable chap Peterkin, whom we soon nicknamed Butter. He was the softest fellow I ever knew (far worse than you, Hamilton), and he hadn't been here a week before the wild blades from the interior, who were bursting with fun and mischief, began to play off all kinds of practical jokes upon him. The very first day he sat down at the mess-table, our worthy governor (who, you are aware, detests practical jokes) played him a trick, quite unintentionally, which raised a laugh against him for many a day. You know that old Mr. Rogan is rather absent at times; well, the first day that Peterkin came to mess (it was breakfast), the old governor asked him, in a patronizing sort of way, to sit at his right hand. Accordingly down he sat, and having never I fancy, been away from his mother's apron-string before, he seemed to feel very uncomfortable, especially as he was regarded as a sort of novelty. The first thing he did was to capsize his plate into his lap, which set the youngsters at the lower end of the table into suppressed fits of laughter. However, he was eating the leg of a dry grouse at the time, so it didn't make much of a mess.

"Try some fish, Peterkin," said Mr. Rogan kindly, seeing that the youth was ill at ease. "That old grouse is tough enough to break your knife."

"A very rough passage," replied the youngster, whose mind was quite confused by hearing the captain of the ship, who sat next to him, giving to his next neighbour a graphic account of the voyage in a very loud key—"I mean, if you please, no, thank you," he stammered, endeavouring to correct himself.

"Ah! a cup of tea perhaps.—Here, Anderson" (turning to the butler, 'a cup of tea to Mr. Peterkin.')

"The butler obeyed the order.

"And here, fill my cup," said old Rogan, interrupting himself in an earnest conversation, into which he had plunged with the gentleman on his left hand. As he said this he lifted his cup to empty the slops, but without paying attention to what he was doing. As luck would have it, the slop-basin was not at hand, and Peterkin's cup

was, so he emptied it innocently into that. Peterkin hadn't courage to arrest his hand, and when the deed was done he looked timidly round to see if the action had been observed. Nearly half the table had seen it, but they pretended ignorance of the thing so well that he thought no one had observed, and so went quietly on with his breakfast, and drank the tea! But I am wandering from my story. Well, about this time there was a young Indian who shot himself accidentally in the woods, and was brought to the fort to see if anything could be done for him. The doctor examined his wound, and found that the ball had passed through the upper part of his right arm and the middle of his right thigh, breaking the bone of the latter in its passage. It was an extraordinary shot for a man to put into himself, for it would have been next to impossible even for *another* man to have done it, unless the Indian had been creeping on all fours. When he was able to speak, however, he explained the mystery. While running through a rough part of the wood after a wounded bird, he stumbled and fell on all fours. The gun, which he was carrying over his shoulder, holding it, as the Indians usually do, by the muzzle, flew forward, and turned right round as he fell, so that the mouth of it was presented towards him. Striking against the stem of a tree, it exploded and shot him through the arm and leg as described ere he had time to rise. A comrade carried him to his lodge, and his wife brought him in a canoe to the fort. For three or four days the doctor had hopes of him, but at last he began to sink, and died on the sixth day after his arrival. His wife and one or two friends buried him in our graveyard, which lies, as you know, on that lonely-looking point just below the powder-magazine. For several months previous to this our worthy doctor had been making strenuous efforts to get an Indian skull to send home to one of his medical friends, but without success. The Indians could not be prevailed upon to cut off the head of one of their dead countrymen for love or money, and the doctor had a dislike to the idea, I suppose, of killing one for himself; but now here was a golden opportunity. The Indian was buried near to the fort, and his relatives had gone away to their tents again. What was to prevent his being dug up? The doctor brooded over the thing for one hour and a half (being exactly the length of time required to smoke out his large Turkey pipe), and then sauntered into Wilson's room. Wilson was busy, as usual, at some of his mechanical contrivances.

"Thrusting his hands deep into his breeches pockets and seating himself on an old sea-chest, he began,—

"I say, Wilson, will you do me a favour?"

"That depends entirely on what the favour is," he replied, without raising his head from his work.

"I want you to help me to cut off an Indian's head!"

"Then I *won't* do you the favour. But pray don't humbug me just now; I'm busy."

"No; but I'm serious, and I can't get it done without help, and I know you're an obliging fellow. Besides, the savage is dead, and has no manner of use for his head now."

"Wilson turned round with a look of intelligence on hearing this.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "I see what you're up to; but I don't half like it. In the first place, his friends would be terribly cut up if they heard of it; and then I've no sort of aptitude for the work of

a resurrectionist; and then if it got wind, we should never hear the last of it; and then—'

"'And then,' interrupted the doctor, 'it would be adding to the light of medical science, you unaspiring monster.'

"'A light,' retorted Wilson, 'which in passing through *some* members of the medical profession, is totally absorbed, and reproduced in the shape of impenetrable darkness.'

"'Now, don't object, my dear fellow; you *know* you're going to do it, so don't coquette with me, but agree at once.'

"'Well, I consent, upon one condition.'

"'And what is that?'

"'That you do not play any practical jokes on *me* with the head when you have got it.'

"'Agreed!' cried the doctor laughing; 'I give you my word of honour. Now he has been buried three days already, so we must set about it at once. Fortunately the graveyard is composed of a sandy soil, so he'll keep for some time yet.'

"The two worthies then entered into a deep consultation as to how they were to set about this deed of darkness. It was arranged that Wilson should take his gun and sally forth a little before dark, as if he were bent on an hour's sport, and, not forgetting his game-bag, proceed to the graveyard, where the doctor engaged to meet him with a couple of spades and a dark lantern. Accordingly, next evening, Mr. Wilson, true to his promise, shouldered his gun and sallied forth.

"It soon became an intensely dark night. Not a single star shone forth to illumine the track along which he stumbled. Everything around was silent and dark, and congenial with the work on which he was bent. But Wilson's heart beat a little more rapidly than usual. He is a bold enough man, as you know, but boldness goes for nothing when superstition comes into play. However, he trudged along fearlessly enough till he came to the thick woods just below the fort, into which he entered with something of a qualm. Scarcely had he set foot on the narrow track that leads to the graveyard, when he ran slap against the post that stands there, but which, in his trepidation, he had entirely forgotten. This quite upset the small amount of courage that remained, and he has since confessed that if he had not had the hope of meeting with the doctor in a few minutes, he would have turned round and fled at *that* moment.

"Recovering a little from this accident, he hurried forward, but with more caution, for although the night seemed as dark as could possibly be while he was crossing the open country, it became speedily evident that there were several shades of darkness which he had not yet conceived. In a few minutes he came to the creek that runs past the graveyard, and here again his nerves got another shake; for, slipping his foot while in the act of commencing the descent, he fell and rolled heavily to the bottom, making noise enough in his fall to scare away all the ghosts in the country. With a palpitating heart poor Wilson gathered himself up, and searched for his gun, which fortunately had not been injured, and then commenced to climb the opposite bank, starting at every twig that snapped under his feet. On reaching the level ground again he breathed a little more freely, and hurried forward with more speed than caution. Suddenly he came into violent contact with a figure, which uttered a loud growl as Wilson reeled backwards.

"'Back, you monster,' he cried, with a hysterical yell, 'or I'll blow your brains out!'

"'It's little good *that* would do ye,' cried the doctor as he came forward. 'Why, you stupid, what did you take me for? You've nearly knocked out my brains as it is,' and the doctor rubbed his forehead ruefully.

"'Oh, it's *you*, doctor!' said Wilson, feeling as if a ton weight had been lifted off his heart; 'I verily thought it was the ghost of the poor fellow we're going to disturb. I do think you had better give it up. Mischief will come of it, you'll see.'

"'Nonsense,' cried the doctor; 'don't be a goose, but let's to work at once. Why, I've got half the thing dug up already.' So saying, he led the way to the grave, in which there was a large opening. Setting the lantern down by the side of it, the two seized their spades and began to dig as if in earnest.

"The fact is that the doctor was nearly as frightened as Wilson, and he afterwards confessed to me that it was an immense relief to him when he heard him fall down the bank of the creek, and knew by the growl he gave that it was he.

"In about half-an-hour the doctor's spade struck upon the coffin lid, which gave forth a hollow sound.

"'Now then, we're about done with it,' said he, standing up to wipe away the perspiration that trickled down his face. 'Take the axe and force up the lid, it's only fixed with common nails, while I—' He did not finish the sentence, but drew a large scalping-knife from a sheath which hung at his belt.

Wilson shuddered and obeyed. A good wrench caused the lid to start, and while he held it partially open the doctor inserted the knife. For five minutes he continued to twist and work with his arms, muttering between his teeth, every now and then, that he was a 'tough subject,' while the crackling of bones and other disagreeable sounds struck upon the horrified ears of his companion.

"'All right,' he exclaimed at last, as he dragged a round object from the coffin and let down the lid with a bang, at the same time placing the savage's head with its ghastly features full in the blaze of the lantern.

"'Now, then, close up,' said he, jumping out of the hole and shovelling in the earth.

"In a few minutes they had filled the grave up and smoothed it down on the surface, and then, throwing the head into the game-bag, retraced their steps to the fort. Their nerves were by this time worked up to such a pitch of excitement, and their minds filled with such a degree of supernatural horror, that they tripped and stumbled over stumps and branches innumerable in their double-quick march. Neither would confess to the other, however, that he was afraid. They even attempted to pass a few facetious remarks as they hurried along, but it would not do, so they relapsed into silence till they came to the hollow beside the powder-magazine. Here the doctor's foot happening to slip, he suddenly grasped Wilson by the shoulder to support himself—a movement which, being unexpected, made his friend leap, as he afterwards expressed it, nearly out of his skin. This was almost too much for them. For a moment they looked at each other as well as the darkness would permit, when all at once a large stone, which the doctor's slip had overbalanced, fell

down the bank and through the bushes with a loud crash. Nothing more was wanting. All further effort to disguise their feelings was dropped. Leaping the rail of the open field in a twinkling, they gave a simultaneous yell of consternation, and fled to the fort like autumn leaves before the wind, never drawing breath till they were safe within the pickets."

"But what has all this to do with Peterkin?" asked Harry, as the accountant paused to relight his pipe and toss a fresh log on the fire.

"Have patience, lad; you shall hear."

The accountant stirred the logs with his toe, drew a few whiffs to see that the pipe was properly ignited, and proceeded.

"For a day or two after this, the doctor was observed to be often mysteriously engaged in an outhouse, of which he kept the key. By some means or other, the skipper, who is always up to mischief, managed to discover the secret. Watching where the doctor hid the key, he possessed himself of it one day, and sallied forth, bent on a lark of some kind or other, but without very well knowing what. Passing the kitchen, he observed Anderson, the butler, raking the fire out of the large oven which stands in the back-yard.

"'Baking again, Anderson?' said he in passing. 'You get soon through with a heavy cargo of bread just now.'

"'Yes, sir; many mouths to feed, sir,' replied the butler, proceeding with his work.

"The skipper sauntered on, and took the track which leads to the boat-house, where he stood for some time in meditation. Casting up his eyes, he saw Peterkin in the distance, looking as if he didn't very well know what to do.

"A sudden thought struck him. Pulling off his coat, he seized a mallet and a calking-chisel, and began to belabour the side of a boat as if his life depended on it. All at once he stopped and stood up, blowing with the exertion.

"'Hollo, Peterkin!' he shouted, and waved his hand.

"Peterkin hastened towards him.

"'Well, sir,' said he, 'do you wish to speak to me?'

"'Yes,' replied the skipper, scratching his head, as if in great perplexity. 'I wish you to do me a favour, Peterkin, but I don't know very well how to ask you.'

"'Oh, I shall be most happy,' said poor Butter eagerly, 'if I can be of any use to you.'

"'I don't doubt your willingness,' replied the other; 'but then—the doctor, you see—the fact is, Peterkin, the doctor being called away to see a sick Indian, has intrusted me with a delicate piece of business—rather a nasty piece of business, I may say—which I promised to do for him. You must know that the Surgical Society of London has written to him, begging, as a great favour, that he would, if possible, procure them the skull of a native. After much trouble he has succeeded in getting one, but is obliged to keep it a great secret, even from his fellow-clerks, lest it should get wind; for if the Indians heard of it they would be sure to kill him, and perhaps burn the fort too. Now I suppose you are aware that it is necessary to boil an Indian's head in order to get the flesh clean off the skull?'

"'Yes; I have heard something of that sort from the students at college, who say that boiling brings flesh more easily away from the bone. But I don't know much about it,' replied Peterkin.

"Well," continued the skipper, "the doctor, who is fond of experiments, wishes to try whether *baking* won't do better than *boiling*, and ordered the oven to be heated for that purpose this morning; but being called suddenly away, as I have said, he begged me to put the head into it as soon as it was ready. I agreed, quite forgetting at the time that I had to get this precious boat ready for sea this very afternoon. Now the oven is prepared, and I dare not leave my work; indeed, I doubt whether I shall have it quite ready and taut after all, and there's the oven cooling; so, if you don't help me, I'm a lost man."

"Having said this, the skipper looked as miserable as his jolly visage would permit, and rubbed his nose.

"Oh, I'll be happy to do it for you, although it is not an agreeable job," replied Butter.

"That's right—that's friendly now!" exclaimed the skipper, as if greatly relieved. "Give us your flipper, my lad;" and seizing Peterkin's hand, he wrung it affectionately. "Now, here is the key of the outhouse; do it as quickly as you can, and don't let anyone see you. It's in a good cause, you know, but the results might be terrible if discovered."

"So saying, the skipper fell to hammering the boat again with surprising vigour till Butter was out of sight, and then resuming his coat, returned to the house.

"An hour after this, Anderson went to take his loaves out of the oven; but he had no sooner taken down the door than a rich odour of cooked meat greeted his nostrils. Uttering a deep growl, the butler shouted out, 'Sprat!'

"Upon this, a very thin boy, with arms and legs like pipe stems, issued from the kitchen, and came timidly towards his master.

"Didn't I tell you, you young blackguard, that the grouse-pie was to be kept for Sunday? and there you've gone and put it to fire to-day."

"The grouse-pie!" said the boy, in amazement.

"Yes, the grouse-pie," retorted the indignant butler; and seizing the urchin by the neck, he held his head down to the mouth of the oven.

"Smell *that*, you villain! What did you mean by it, eh?"

"Oh, murder!" shouted the boy, as with a violent effort he freed himself, and ran shrieking into the house.

"Murder!" repeated Anderson in astonishment, while he stooped to look into the oven, where the first thing that met his gaze was a human head, whose ghastly visage and staring eyeballs worked and moved about under the influence of the heat as if it were alive.

"With a yell that rung through the whole fort, the horrified butler rushed through the kitchen and out at the front door, where, as ill-luck would have it, Mr. Rogan happened to be standing at the moment. Pitching head first into the small of the old gentleman's back, he threw him off the platform and fell into his arms. Starting up in a moment, the governor dealt Anderson a cuff that sent him reeling towards the kitchen door again, on the steps of which he sat down, and began to sing out, 'Oh, murder, murder! the oven, the oven!' and not another word, bad, good, or indifferent, could be got out of him for the next half-hour, as he swayed himself to and fro and wrung his hands.

"To make a long story short, Mr. Rogan went himself to the oven, and fished out the head, along with the loaves, which were, of course, all spoiled."

"And what was the result?" inquired Harry.

"Oh, there was a long investigation, and the skipper got a blowing-up, and the doctor a warning to let Indians' skulls lie at peace in their graves for the future, and poor Butter was sent to M'Kenzie's River as a punishment, for old Rogan could never be brought to believe that he hadn't been a willing tool in the skipper's hands; and Anderson lost his batch of bread and his oven, for it had to be pulled down and a new one built."

"Humph! and I've no doubt the governor read you a pretty stiff lecture on practical joking."

"He did," replied the accountant, laying aside his pipe, and drawing the green blanket over him, while Harry piled several large logs on the fire.

"Good-night," said the accountant.

"Good-night," replied his companions; and in a few minutes more they were sound asleep in their snowy camp, while the huge fire continued, during the greater part of the night, to cast its light on their slumbering forms.

CHAPTER XXI.

Ptarmigan-hunting—Hamilton's shooting powers severely tested—A snow-storm.

AT about four o'clock on the following morning, the sleepers were awakened by the cold, which had become very intense. The fire had burned down to a few embers, which merely emitted enough light to make darkness visible. Harry being the most active of the party, was the first to bestir himself. Raising himself on his elbow, while his teeth chattered and his limbs trembled with cold, he cast a woe-begone and excessively sleepy glance towards the place where the fire had been; then he scratched his head slowly; then he stared at the fire again; then he languidly glanced at Hamilton's sleeping visage; and then he yawned. The accountant observed all this; for although he appeared to be buried in the depths of slumber, he was wide awake in reality, and moreover intensely cold. The accountant, however, was sly—deep, as he would have said himself—and knew that Harry's active habits would induce him to rise, on awaking, and rekindle the fire,—an event which the accountant earnestly desired to see accomplished, but which he as earnestly resolved should not be performed by *him*. Indeed, it was with this end in view that he had given vent to the terrific snore which had aroused his young companion a little sooner than would have otherwise been the case.

"My eye," exclaimed Harry, in an undertone, "how precious cold it is!"

His eye making no reply to this remark, he arose, and going down on his hands and knees, began to coax the charcoal into a flame. By dint of severe blowing, he soon succeeded, and heaping on a quantity of small twigs, the fitful flame sprang up into a steady blaze. He then threw several heavy logs on the fire, and in a very short space of time restored it almost to its original vigour.

"What an abominable row you are kicking up!" growled the accountant; "why, you would waken the seven sleepers. Oh! mending the fire," he added, in an altered tone; "ah! I'll excuse you, my boy, since that's what you're at."

The accountant hereupon got up, along with Hamilton, who was now also awake, and the three spread their hands over the bright fire, and revolved their bodies before it, until they imbibed a satisfactory amount of heat. They were much too sleepy to converse, however, and contented themselves with a very brief inquiry as to the state of Hamilton's heels, which elicited the sleepy reply, "They feel quite well, thank you." In a short time, having become agreeably warm, they gave a simultaneous yawn, and lying down again fell into a sleep, from which they did not awaken until the red winter sun shot its early rays over the arctic scenery.

Once more Harry sprang up, and let his hand fall heavily on Hamilton's shoulder. Thus rudely assailed, that youth also sprang up, giving a shout, at the same time, that brought the accountant to his feet in an instant; and so, as if by an electric spark, the sleepers were simultaneously roused into a state of wide-awake activity.

"How excessively hungry I feel! isn't it strange?" said Hamilton, as he assisted in rekindling the fire, while the accountant filled his pipe, and Harry stuffed the tea-kettle full of snow.

"Strange!" cried Harry, as he placed the kettle on the fire—"strange to be hungry after a five miles' walk and a night in the snow? I would rather say it was strange if you were *not* hungry. Throw on that billet, like a good fellow, and spit those grouse, while I cut some pemmican and prepare the tea."

"How are the heels now, Hamilton?" asked the accountant, who divided his attention between his pipe and his snow-shoes, the lines of which required to be readjusted.

"They appear to be as well as if nothing had happened to them," replied Hamilton: "I've been looking at them, and there is no mark whatever. They do not even feel tender."

"Lucky for you, old boy, that they were taken in time, else you'd have had another story to tell."

"Do you mean to say that people's heels really freeze and fall off?" inquired the other, with a look of incredulity.

"Soft, very soft, and green," murmured Harry, in a low voice, while he continued his work of adding fresh snow to the kettle as the process of melting reduced its bulk.

"I mean to say," replied the accountant, tapping the ashes out of his pipe, "that not only heels, but hands, feet, noses, and ears, frequently freeze, and fall off in this country, as you will find by sad experience if you don't look after yourself a little better than you have done hitherto."

One of the evil effects of the perpetual jesting that prevailed at York Fort was, that "soft" (in other words, straightforward, unsuspecting) youths had to undergo a long process of learning-by-experience; first, *believing* everything, and then *doubting* everything, ere they arrived at that degree of sophistication which enabled them to distinguish between truth and falsehood.

Having reached the *doubting* period in his training, Hamilton looked down and said nothing, at least with his mouth, though his eyes evidently remarked, "I don't believe you." In future years,

however, the evidence of these same eyes convinced him that what the accountant said upon this occasion was but too true.

Breakfast was a repetition of the supper of the previous evening. During its discussion they planned proceedings for the day.

"My notion is," said the accountant, interrupting the flow of words ever and anon to chew the morsel with which his mouth was filled—"my notion is, that as it's a fine clear day we should travel five miles through the country parallel with North River. I know the ground, and can guide you easily to the spots where there are lots of willows, and therefore plenty of ptarmigan, seeing that they feed on willow tops; and the snow that fell last night will help us a little."

"How will the snow help us?" inquired Hamilton.

"By covering up all the old tracks, to be sure, and showing only the new ones."

"Well, captain," said Harry, as he raised a can of tea to his lips, and nodded to Hamilton as if drinking his health, "go on with your proposals for the day. Five miles up the river to begin with, then—"

"Then we'll pull up," continued the accountant; "make a fire, rest a bit, and eat a mouthful of pemmican; after which we'll strike across country for the southern wood-cutters' track, and so home."

"And how much will that be?"

"About fifteen miles."

"Ha!" exclaimed Harry; "pass the kettle, please. Thanks.—Do you think you're up to that, Hammy?"

"I will try what I can do," replied Hamilton. "If the snow-shoes don't cause me to fall often, I think I shall stand the fatigue very well."

"That's right," said the accountant; "'faint heart,' etc., you know. If you go on as you've begun, you'll be chosen to head the next expedition to the north pole."

"Well," replied Hamilton, good-humouredly, "pray head the present expedition, and let us be gone."

"Right!" ejaculated the accountant, rising. "I'll just put my odds and ends out of the reach of the foxes, and then we shall be off."

In a few minutes everything was placed in security, guns loaded, snow-shoes put on, and the winter camp deserted. At first the walking was fatiguing, and poor Hamilton more than once took a sudden and eccentric plunge; but after getting beyond the wooded country, they found the snow much more compact, and their march, therefore, much more agreeable. On coming to the place where it was probable that they might fall in with ptarmigan, Hamilton became rather excited, and apt to imagine that little lumps of snow which hung upon the bushes here and there were birds.

"There now," he cried, in an energetic and slightly positive tone, as another of these masses of snow suddenly met his eager eye—"that's one, I'm *quite* sure."

The accountant and Harry both stopped short on hearing this, and looked in the direction indicated.

"Fire away, then, Hammy," said the former, endeavouring to suppress a smile.

"But do you think it *really* is one?" asked Hamilton anxiously.

"Well, I don't *see* it exactly, but then, you *know*, I'm near-sighted."

"Don't give him a chance of escape," cried Harry, seeing that his

friend was undecided. "If you really do see a bird, you'd better shoot it, for they've got a strong propensity to take wing when disturbed."

Thus admonished, Hamilton raised his gun and took aim. Suddenly he lowered his piece again, and looking round at Harry, said in a low whisper,—

"Oh, I should like *so* much to shoot it while flying! Would it not be better to set it up first?"

"By no means," answered the accountant. "'A bird in the hand,' etc. Take him as you find him—look sharp; he'll be off in a second."

Again the gun was pointed, and, after some difficulty in taking aim fired.

"Ah, what a pity you've missed him!" shouted Harry. "But see, he's not off yet; how tame he is, to be sure! Give him the other barrel, Hammy."

This piece of advice proved to be unnecessary. In his anxiety to get the bird, Hamilton had cocked both barrels, and while gazing, half in disappointment, half in surprise, at the supposed bird, his finger unintentionally pressed the second trigger. In a moment the piece exploded. Being accidentally aimed in the right direction, it blew the lump of snow to atoms, and at the same time hitting its owner on the chest with the butt, knocked him over flat upon his back.

"What a gun it is, to be sure!" said Harry, with a roguish laugh, as he assisted the discomfited sportsman to rise; "it knocks over game with butt and muzzle at once."

"Quite a rare instance of one butt knocking another down," added the accountant.

At this moment a large flock of ptarmigan, startled by the double report, rose with a loud whirring noise about a hundred yards in advance, and after flying a short distance alighted.

"There's real game at last, though," cried the accountant, as he hurried after the birds, followed closely by his young friends.

They soon reached the spot where the flock had alighted, and after following up the tracks for a few yards further, set them up again. As the birds rose the accountant fired and brought down two; Harry shot one and missed another; Hamilton being so nervously interested in the success of his comrades that he forgot to fire at all.

"How stupid of me!" he exclaimed, while the others loaded their guns.

"Never mind; better luck next time," said Harry, as they resumed their walk. "I saw the flock settle down about half a mile in advance of us; so step out."

Another short walk brought the sportsmen again within range.

"Go to the front, Hammy," said the accountant, "and take the first shot this time."

Hamilton obeyed. He had scarcely made ten steps in advance, when a single bird, that seemed to have been separated from the others, ran suddenly out from under a bush, and stood stock-still, at a distance of a few yards, with its neck stretched out and its black eye wide open, as if in astonishment.

"Now then, you can't miss *that*."

Hamilton was quite taken aback by the suddenness of this necessity for instantaneous action. Instead, therefore, of taking aim leisurely (seeing that he had abundant time to do so), he flew entirely to the

opposite extreme, took no aim at all, and fired off both barrels at once, without putting the gun to his shoulder. The result of this was that the affrighted bird flew away unharmed, while Harry and the accountant burst spontaneously into fits of laughter.

"How very provoking!" said the poor youth, with a dejected look.

"Never mind—never say die—try again," said the accountant, on recovering his gravity. Having reloaded, they continued the pursuit.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Harry, suddenly, "here are three dead birds.—I verily believe, Hamilton, that you have killed them all at one shot by accident."

"Can it be possible?" exclaimed his friend, as with a look of amazement he regarded the birds.

There was no doubt about the fact. There they lay, plump and still warm, with one or two drops of bright red blood upon their white plumage. Ptarmigan are almost pure white, so that it requires a practised eye to detect them, even at the distance of a few yards; and it would be almost impossible to hunt them without dogs, but for the tell-tale snow, in which their tracks are distinctly marked, enabling the sportsman to follow them up with unerring certainty. When Hamilton made his bad shot, neither he nor his companions observed a group of ptarmigan not more than fifty yards before them their attention being riveted at the time on the solitary bird; and the gun happening to be directed towards them when it was fired, three were instantly and unwittingly placed *hors de combat*, while the others ran away. This the survivors frequently do when very tame, instead of taking wing. Thus it was that Hamilton, to his immense delight, made such a successful shot without being aware of it.

Having bagged their game, the party proceeded on their way. Several large flocks of birds were raised, and the game-bags nearly filled, before reaching the spot where they intended to turn and bend their steps homewards. This induced them to give up the idea of going further; and it was fortunate they came to this resolution, for a storm was brewing, which in the eagerness of pursuit after game they had not noticed. Dark masses of leaden-coloured clouds were gathering in the sky overhead, and faint sighs of wind came, ever and anon, in fitful gusts from the north-west.

Hurrying forward as quickly as possible, they now pursued their course in a direction which would enable them to cross the wood-cutters' track. This they soon reached, and finding it pretty well beaten, were enabled to make more rapid progress. Fortunately the wind was blowing on their backs, otherwise they would have had to contend not only with its violence, but also with the snow-drift, which now whirled in bitter fury among the trees, or scoured like driving clouds over the plain. Under this aspect, the flat country over which they travelled seemed the perfection of bleak desolation. Their way, however, did not lie in a direct line. The track was some what tortuous, and gradually edged towards the north, until the wind blew in their teeth. At this point, too, they came to the stretch of open ground which they had crossed at a point some miles further to the northward in their night march. Here the storm raged in all its fury, and as they looked out upon the plain, before quitting the shelter of the wood, they paused to tighten their belts and readjust their snow-shoe lines. The gale was so violent that the whole plain seemed

tossed about like billows of the sea, as the drift rose and fell, curled, eddied, and dashed along, so that it was impossible to see more than half-a-dozen yards in advance.

"Heaven preserve us from ever being caught in an exposed place on such a night as this!" said the accountant, as he surveyed the prospect before him. "Luckily the open country here is not more than a quarter of a mile broad, and even that little bit will try our wind somewhat."

Hamilton and Harry seemed by their looks to say, "We could easily face even a stiffer breeze than that, if need be."

"What should we do," inquired the former, "if the plain were five or six miles broad?"

"Do? why, we should have to camp in the woods till it blew over, that's all," replied the accountant; but seeing that we are not reduced to such a necessity just now, and that the day is drawing to a close, let us face it at once. I'll lead the way, and see that you follow close at my heels. Don't lose sight of me for a moment, and if you do by chance, give a shout; d'ye hear?"

The two lads replied in the affirmative, and then bracing themselves up as if for a great effort, stepped vigorously out upon the plain, and were instantly swallowed up in clouds of snow. For half-an-hour or more they battled slowly against the howling storm, pressing forward for some minutes with heads down, as if *boring* through it, then turning their backs to the blast for a few seconds' relief, but always keeping as close to each other as possible. At length the woods were gained; on entering which it was discovered that Hamilton was missing,

"Hollo! where's Hamilton?" exclaimed Harry; I saw him beside me not five minutes ago."

The accountant gave a loud shout, but there was no reply. Indeed nothing short of his own stentorian voice could have been heard at all amid the storm.

"There's nothing for it," said Harry, "but to search at once, else he'll wander about and get lost." Saying this he began to retrace his steps, just as a brief lull in the gale took place.

"Hollo! don't you hear a cry, Harry?"

At this moment there was another lull; the drift fell, and for an instant cleared away, revealing the bewildered Hamilton, not twenty yards off, standing, like a pillar of snow, in mute despair.

Profiting by the glimpse, Harry rushed forward, caught him by the arm, and led him into the partial shelter of the forest.

Nothing further befell them after this. Their route lay in shelter all the way to the fort. Poor Hamilton, it is true, took one or two of his occasional plunges by the way, but without any serious result—not even to the extent of stuffing his nose, ears, neck, mittens, pockets, gun-barrels, and everything else with snow, because, these being quite full and hard packed already, there was no room left for the addition of another particle.

CHAPTER XXII.

The winter packet—Harry hears from old friends, and wishes that he was with them

LETTERS from home? What a burst of sudden emotion—what a riot of conflicting feelings, of dread and joy, expectation and anxiety—what a flood of old memories—what stirring up of almost forgotten associations, these three words create in the hearts of those who dwell in distant regions of this earth, far, far away from kith and kin, from friends and acquaintances, from the much-loved scenes of childhood, and from *home*! Letters from home! How gratefully the sound falls upon the ears that have been long unaccustomed to sounds and things connected with home, and so long accustomed to wild, savage sounds, that these have at length lost their novelty, and become everyday and commonplace, while the first have gradually grown strange and unwonted. For many long months home and all connected with it have become a dream of other days, and savage-land a present reality. The mind has by degrees become absorbed by surrounding objects—objects so utterly unassociated with or unsuggestive of any other land, that it involuntarily ceases to think of the scenes of childhood with the same feelings that it once did. As time rolls on, home assumes a misty, undefined character, as if it were not only distant in reality, but were also slowly retreating further and further away—growing gradually faint and dream-like, though not less dear, to the mental view.

"Letters from home!" shouted Mr. Wilson, and the doctor, and the skipper, simultaneously, as the sportsmen, after dashing through the wild storm, at last reached the fort, and stumbled tumultuously into Bachelors' Hall.

"What!—Where!—How!—You don't mean it!" they exclaimed, coming to a sudden stand, like three pillars of snow-clad astonishment.

"Ay," replied the doctor, who affected to be quite cool upon all occasions, and rather cooler than usual if the occasion was more than ordinarily exciting—"ay, we *do* mean it. Old Rogan has got the packet, and is even now disembowelling it."

"More than than that," interrupted the skipper, who sat smoking as usual by the stove, with his hands in his breeches pockets—"more than that, I saw him dissecting into the very marrow of the thing; so if we don't storm the old admiral in his cabin, he'll go to sleep over these prosy yarns that the governor-in-chief writes to him, and we'll have to whistle for our letters till midnight."

The skipper's remark was interrupted by the opening of the outer door and the entrance of the butler. "Mr. Rogan wishes to see you, sir," said that worthy to the accountant.

"I'll be with him in a minute," he replied, as he threw off his capote and proceeded to unwind himself as quickly as his multitudinous haps would permit.

By this time Harry Somerville and Hamilton were busily occupied in a similar manner, while a running fire of question and answer, jesting remark and bantering reply, was kept up between the young men, from their various apartments and the hall. The doctor was cool, as usual, and impudent. He had a habit of walking up and down while he smoked, and was thus enabled to look in upon the

inmates of the several sleeping-rooms, and make his remarks in a quiet sarcastic manner, the galling effect of which was heightened by his habit of pausing at the end of every two or three words, to emit a few puffs of smoke. Having exhausted a good deal of small talk in this way, and having, moreover, finished his pipe, the doctor went to the stove to refill and relight.

"What a deal of trouble you do take to make yourself comfortable!" said he to the skipper, who sat with his chair tilted on its hind legs, and a pillow at his back.

"No harm in that, doctor," replied the skipper, with a smile.

"No harm, certainly, but it looks uncommonly lazylike."

"What does?"

"Why, putting a pillow at your back, to be sure."

The doctor was a full-fleshed, muscular man, and owing to this fact it mattered little to him whether his chair happened to be an easy one or not. As the skipper sometimes remarked, he carried padding always about with him; he was therefore, a little apt to sneer at the attempts of his brethren to render the ill-shaped, wooden-bottomed chairs, with which the hall was ornamented, bearable.

"Well, doctor," said the skipper, "I cannot see how you make me out lazy. Surely it is not an evidence of laziness my endeavouring to render these instruments of torture less tormenting? Seeking to be comfortable, if it does not inconvenience any one else, is not laziness. Why, what *is* comfort?" The skipper began to wax philosophical at this point, and took the pipe from his mouth as he gravely propounded the momentous question. "What *is* comfort? If I go out to camp in the woods, and after turning in find a sharp stump sticking into my ribs on one side, and a pine root driving in the small of my back on the other side, is *that* comfort? Certainly not. And if I get up, seize a hatchet, level the stump, cut away the root, and spread pine brush over the place, am I to be called lazy for doing so? Or if I sit down on a chair, and on trying to lean back to rest myself find that the stupid lubber who made it has so constructed it that four small hard points alone touch my person—two being at the hip-joints and two at the shoulder-blades; and if to relieve such physical agony I jump up and clap a pillow at my back, am I to be called lazy for doing *that*?"

"What a glorious entry that would make in the log!" said the doctor, in a low tone, soliloquizingly, as if he made the remark merely for his own satisfaction, while he tapped the ashes out of his pipe.

The skipper looked as if he meditated a sharp reply: but his intentions, whatever they might have been, were interrupted by the opening of the door, and the entrance of the accountant, bearing under his arm a packet of letters.

A general rush was made upon him, and in a few minutes a dead silence reigned in the hall, broken only at intervals by an exclamation of surprise or pathos, as the inmates, in the retirement of their separate apartments, perused letters from friends in the interior of the country and friends at home: letters that were old—some of them bearing dates many months back—and travel-stained, but new and fresh and cheering, nevertheless, to their owners, as the clear bright sun in winter or the verdant leaves in spring.

Harry Somerville's letters were numerous and long. He had several

from friends in Red River, besides one or two from other parts of the Indian country, and one—it was very thick and heavy—that bore the post-marks of Britain. It was late that night ere the last candle was extinguished in the hall, and it was late too before Harry Somerville ceased to peruse and re-peruse the long letter from home, and found time or inclination to devote to his other correspondents. Among the rest was a letter from his old friend and companion, Charley Kennedy, which ran as follows :—

MY DEAR HARRY,—It really seems more than an age since I saw you. Your last epistle, written in the perturbation of mind consequent upon being doomed to spend another winter at York Fort, reached me only a few days ago, and filled me with pleasant recollections of other days. Oh! man, how much I wish that you were with me in this beautiful country! You are aware that I have been what they call “roughing it” since you and I parted on the shores of Lake Winnipeg; but, my dear fellow, the idea that most people have of what that phrase means is a very erroneous one indeed. “Roughing it” I certainly have been, inasmuch as I have been living on rough fare, associating with rough men, and sleeping on rough beds under the starry sky; but I assure you that all this is not half so rough upon the constitution as what they call leading an *easy life*, which is simply a life that makes a poor fellow stagnate, body and spirit, till the one comes to be unable to digest its food, and the other incompetent to jump at so much as half an idea. Anything but an easy life, to my mind. Ah! there’s nothing like roughing it, Harry, my boy. Why, I am thriving on it—growing like a young walrus, eating like a Canadian voyageur, and sleeping like a top! This is a splendid country for sport, and as our *bourgeois** has taken it into his head that I am a good hand at making friends with the Indians, he has sent me out on several expeditions, and afforded me some famous opportunities of seeing life among the red-skins. There is a talk just now of establishing a new outpost in this district, so if I succeed in persuading the governor to let me accompany the party, I shall have something interesting to write about in my next letter. By the way, I wrote to you a month ago, by two Indians who said they were going to the missionary station at Norway House. Did you ever get it? There is a hunter here just now who goes by the name of Jacques Caradoc. He is a first-rater—can do anything, in a wild way, that lies within the power of mortal man, and is an inexhaustible anecdote-teller, in a quiet way. He and I have been out buffalo-hunting two or three times, and it would have done your heart good, Harry, my dear boy, to have seen us scouring over the prairie together on two big-boned Indian horses—regular trained buffalo-runners, that didn’t need the spur to urge, nor the rein to guide them, when once they caught sight of the black cattle, and kept a sharp look-out for badger-holes, just as if they had been reasonable creatures. The first time I went out I had several rather ugly falls, owing to my inexperience. The fact is, that if a man has never run buffaloes before, he’s sure to get one or two upsets, no matter how good a horseman he may be. And that monster Jacques, although he’s the best fellow I ever met with for a hunting companion,

* The gentleman in charge of an establishment is always designated the *bourgeois*.

always took occasion to grin at my mishaps, and gravely to read me a lecture to the effect that they were all owing to my own clumsiness or stupidity ; which, you will acknowledge, was not calculated to restore my equanimity.

The very first run we had cost me the entire skin of my nose, and converted that feature into a superb Roman for the next three weeks. It happened thus. Jacques and I were riding over the prairie in search of buffaloes. The place was interspersed with sundry knolls covered with trees, slips and belts of woodland, with ponds scattered among them, and open sweeps of the plain here and there ; altogether a delightful country to ride through. It was a clear early morning, so that our horses were fresh and full of spirit. They knew, as well as we ourselves did, what we were out for, and it was no easy matter to restrain them. The one I rode was a great long-legged beast, as like as possible to that abominable kangaroo that nearly killed me at Red River ; as for Jacques, he was mounted on a first-rate charger. I don't know how it is, but somehow or other everything about Jacques, or belonging to him, or in the remotest degree connected with him, is always first-rate ! He generally owns a first-rate horse, and if he happens by any unlucky chance to be compelled to mount a bad one, it immediately becomes another animal. He seems to infuse some of his own wonderful spirit into it ! Well, as Jacques and I curvetted along, skirting the low bushes at the edge of a wood, out burst a whole herd of buffaloes. Bang went Jacques' gun, almost before I had winked to make sure that I saw rightly, and down fell the fattest of them all, while the rest tossed up their tails, heels, and heads in one grand whirl of indignant amazement, and scoured away like the wind. In a moment our horses were at full stretch after them, on their *own* account entirely, and without any reference to *us*. When I recovered my self-possession a little, I threw forward my gun and fired ; but owing to my endeavouring to hold the reins at the same time, I nearly blew off one of my horse's ears, and only knocked up the dust about six yards ahead of us ! Of course Jacques could not let this pass unnoticed. He was sitting quietly loading his gun, as cool as a cucumber, while his horse was dashing forward at full stretch, with the reins hanging loosely on his neck.

"Ah, Mister Charles," said he, with the least possible grin on his leathern visage, "that was not well done. You should never hold the reins when you fire, nor try to put the gun to your shoulder. It a'n't needful. The beast'll look arter itself, if it's a riglar buffalo-runner ; any ways holdin' the reins is of no manner of use. I once know'd a gentleman that came out here to see the buffalo-huntin'. He was a good enough shot in his way, an' a first-rate rider. But he was full o' queer notions : he *would* load his gun with the ramrod in the riglar way, instead o' doin' as we do, tumblin' in a drop powder, spittin' a ball out your mouth down the muzzle, and hittin' the stock on the pommel of the saddle to send it home. And he had them miserable things—the *somethin'* 'cussion-caps, and used to fiddle away with them while we were knockin' over the cattle in all directions. Moreover, he had a notion that it was altogether wrong to let go his reins even for a moment, and so, what between the ramrod and the 'cussion-caps and the reins, he was worse than the greenest clerk that ever came to the country. He gave it up in despair at last, after lamin' two horses, and finished off by runnin' after a big bull, that

turned on him all of a sudden, crammed its head and horns into the side of his horse, and sent the poor fellow head over heels on the green grass. He wasn't much the worse for it, but his fine double-barrelled gun was twisted into a shape that would almost have puzzled an Injin to tell what it was." Well, Harry, all the time that Jacques was telling me this we were gaining on the buffaloes, and at last we got quite close to them, and as luck would have it, the very thing that happened to the amateur sportsman happened to me. I went madly after a big bull in spite of Jacques's remonstrances, and just as I got alongside of him up went his tail (a sure sign that his anger was roused), and round he came, head to the front, stiff as a rock; my poor charger's chest went right between his horns, and, as a matter of course, I continued the race upon *nothing*, head first, for a distance of about thirty yards, and brought up on the bridge of my nose. My poor dear father used to say I was a bull-headed rascal, and, upon my word, I believe he was more literally correct than he imagined; for although I fell with a fearful crash, head first, on the hard plain, I rose up immediately, and in a few minutes was able to resume the chase again. My horse was equally fortunate, for although thus brought to a sudden stand while at full gallop, he wheeled about, gave a contemptuous flourish with his heels, and cantered after Jacques, who soon caught him again. My head bothered me a good deal for some time after this accident, and swelled up till my eyes became almost undistinguishable; but a few weeks put me all right again. And who do you think this man Jacques is? You'd never guess. He's the trapper whom Redfeather told us of long ago, and whose wife was killed by the Indians. He and Redfeather have met, and are very fond of each other. How often in the midst of these wild excursions have my thoughts wandered to you, Harry! The fellows I meet with here are all kind-hearted, merry companions, but none like yourself. I sometimes say to Jacques, when we become communicative to each other beside the camp-fire, that my earthly felicity would be perfect if I had Harry Somerville here; and then I think of Kate, my sweet, loving sister Kate, and feel that, even although I had you with me, there would still be something wanting to make things perfect. Talking of Kate, by the way, I have received a letter from her, the first sheet of which, as it speaks of mutual Red River friends, I herewith enclose. Pray keep it safe, and return per first opportunity. We've loads of furs here and plenty of deer-stalking, not to mention galloping on horse-back on the plains in summer and dog-sledging in winter. Alas! my poor friend, I fear that it is rather selfish in me to write so feelingly about my agreeable circumstances, when I know you are slowly dragging out your existence at that melancholy place York Fort; but believe me, I sympathize with you, and I hope earnestly that you will soon be appointed to more genial scenes. I have much, very much, to tell you yet, but am compelled to reserve it for a future epistle, as the packet which is to convey this is on the point of being closed.

Adieu, my dear Harry, and wherever you may happen to pitch your tent, always bear in kindly remembrance your old friend,

CHARLES KENNEDY.

The letter was finished, but Harry did not cease to hold intercourse with his friend. With his head resting on his two hands and his

elbows on the table, he sat long, silently gazing on the signature, while his mind revelled in the past, the present, and the future. He bounded over the wilderness that lay between him and the beautiful plains of the Saskatchewan. He seized Charley round the neck, and hugged and wrestled with him as in days of yore. He mounted an imaginary charger, and swept across the plains along with him; listened to anecdotes innumerable from Jacques, attacked thousands of buffaloes, singled out scores of wild bulls, pitched over horses' heads and alighted precisely on the bridge of his nose, always in close proximity to his old friend. Gradually his mind returned to its prison-house, and his eye fell on Kate's letter, which he picked up and began to read. It ran thus:—

MY DEAR, DEAR, DARLING CHARLEY,—I cannot tell you how much my heart has yearned to see you, or hear from you, for many long, long months past. Your last delightful letter, which I treasure up as the most precious object I possess, has indeed explained to me how utterly impossible it was to have written a day sooner than you did; but that does not comfort me a bit, or make those weary packets more rapid and frequent in their movements, or the time that passes between the periods of hearing from you less dreary and anxious. God bless and protect you, my darling, in the midst of all the dangers that surround you. But I did not intend to begin this letter by murmuring, so pray forgive me, and I shall try to atone for it by giving you a minute account of everybody here about whom you are interested. Our beloved father and mother, I am thankful to say, are quite well. Papa has taken more than ever to smoking since you went away. He is seldom out of the summer-house in the garden now, where I very frequently go, and spend hours together in reading to and talking with him. He very often speaks of you, and I am certain that he misses you far more than we expected, although I think he cannot miss you nearly so much as I do. For some weeks past, indeed ever since we got your last letter, papa was engaged all the forenoon in some mysterious work, for he used to lock himself up in the summer-house—a thing he never did before. One day I went there at my usual time, and instead of having to wait till he should unlock the door, I found it already open, and entered the room, which was so full of smoke that I could hardly see. I found papa writing at a small table, and the moment he heard my footstep he jumped up with a fierce frown, and shouted, "Who's there?" in that terrible voice that he used to speak in long ago when angry with his men, but which he has almost quite given up for some time past. He never speaks to me, as you know very well, but in kindest tones, so you may imagine what a dreadful fright I got for a moment; but it was only for a moment, because the instant he saw that it was me his dear face changed, and he folded me in his arms, saying, "Ah, Kate, forgive me, my darling! I did not know it was you, and I thought I had locked the door, and was angry at being so unceremoniously interrupted." He then told me he was just finishing a letter of advice to you, and going up to the table, pushed the papers hurriedly into a drawer. As he did so I guessed what had been his mysterious occupation, for he seemed to have covered *quires* of paper with the closest writing. Ah, Charley, you're a lucky fellow to be able to extort such long letters from our dear father. You know how difficult he finds it to write even the shortest note, and you remember

his old favourite expression, "I would rather skin a wild buffalo bull alive than write a long letter." He deserves long ones in return, Charley; but I need not urge you on that score—you are an excellent correspondent. Mamma is able to go out every day now for a drive in the prairie. She was confined to the house for nearly three weeks last month, with some sort of illness that the doctor did not seem to understand, and at one time I was much frightened, and very, very anxious about her, she became so weak. It would have made your heart glad to have seen the tender way in which papa nursed her through the illness. I had fancied that he was the very last man in the world to make a sick-nurse, so bold and quick in his movements, and with such a loud, gruff voice—for it *is* gruff, although very sweet at the same time. But the moment he began to attend to mamma he spoke more softly even than dear Mr. Addison does, and he began to walk about the house on tiptoe, and persevered so long in this latter that all his moccasins began to be worn out at the toes, while the heels remained quite strong. I begged of him often not to take so much trouble, as *I* was naturally the proper nurse for mamma; but he wouldn't hear of it, and insisted on carrying breakfast, dinner, and tea to her, besides giving her all her medicine. He was for ever making mistakes, however, much to his own sorrow, the darling man; and I had to watch him pretty closely, for more than once he has been on the point of giving mamma a glass of laudanum in mistake for a glass of port wine. I was a good deal frightened for him at first, as, before he became accustomed to the work, he tumbled over the chairs and tripped on the carpets while carrying trays with dinners and breakfasts, till I thought he would really injure himself at last, and then he was so terribly angry with himself at making such a noise and breaking the dishes—I think he has broken nearly an entire dinner and tea set of crockery. Poor George, the cook, has suffered most from these mishaps—for you know that dear papa cannot get angry without letting a *little* of it out upon somebody; and whenever he broke a dish or let a tray fall, he used to rush into the kitchen, shake his fist in George's face, and ask him in a fierce voice, what he meant by it. But he always got better in a few seconds, and finished off by telling him never to mind, that he was a good servant on the whole, and he wouldn't say any more about it just now, but he had better look sharp out and not do it again. I must say, in praise of George, that on such occasions he looked very sorry indeed, and said he hoped he would always do his best to give satisfaction. This was only proper in him, for he ought to be very thankful that our father restrains his anger so much; for you know he was rather violent *once*, and you've no idea, Charley, how great a restraint he now lays on himself. He seems to me quite like a lamb, and I am beginning to feel somehow as if we had been mistaken, and that he never was a passionate man at all. I think it is partly owing to dear Mr. Addison, who visits us very frequently now, and papa and he are often shut up together for many hours in the smoking-house. I was sure that papa would soon come to like him, for his religion is so free from everything like severity or affected solemnity. The cook, and Rosa, and my dog that you named Twist, are all quite well. The last has grown into a very large and beautiful animal, something like the stag-hound in the picture-book we used to study together long ago. He is exceedingly fond of me, and I feel

him to be quite a protector. The cocks and hens, the cow and the old mare, are also in perfect health ; so now, having told you a good deal about ourselves, I will give you a short account of the doings in the colony.

First of all, your old friend Mr. Kipples is still alive and well, and so are all our old companions in the school. One or two of the latter have left, and young Naysmith has joined the Company's service. Betty Peters comes very often to see us, and she always asks for you with great earnestness. I think you have stolen the old woman's heart, Charley, for she speaks of you with great affection. Old Mr. Seaforth is still as vigorous as ever, dashing about the settlement on a high-mettled steed, just as if he were one of the youngest men in the colony. He nearly poisoned himself, poor man, a month ago, by taking a dose of some kind of medicine by mistake. I did not hear what it was, but I am told that the treatment was rather severe. Fortunately the doctor happened to be at home when he was sent for, else our old friend would, I fear, have died. As it was, the doctor cured him with great difficulty. He first gave him an emetic, then put mustard blisters to the soles of his feet, and afterwards lifted him into one of his own carts, without springs, in which he drove him for a long time over all the ploughed fields in the neighbourhood. If this is not an exaggerated account, Mr. Seaforth is certainly made of sterner stuff than most men. I was told a funny anecdote of him a few days ago, which I am sure you have never heard, otherwise you would have told it to me, for there used to be no secrets between us, Charley—alas ! I have no one to confide in or advise with now that you are gone. You have often heard of the great flood ; not Noah's one, but the flood that nearly swept away our settlement and did so much damage before you and I were born. Well, you recollect that people used to tell of the way in which the river rose after the breaking up of the ice and how it soon overflowed all the low points, sweeping off everything in its course. Old Mr. Seaforth's house stood at that time on the little point, just beyond the curve of the river, at the foot of which our own house stands, and as the river continued to rise, Mr. Seaforth went about actively securing his property. At first he only thought of his boat and canoes, which with the help of his son Peter and a Canadian, who happened at the time to be employed about the place, he dragged up and secured to an iron staple in the side of his house. Soon, however, he found that the danger was greater than at first he imagined. The point became completely covered with water, which brought down great numbers of *half-drowned* and *quite-drowned* cattle, pigs, and poultry, and stranded them at the garden fence, so that in a short time poor Mr. Seaforth could scarcely move about his overcrowded domains. On seeing this he drove his own cattle to the highest land in his neighbourhood and hastened back to the house intending to carry as much of the furniture as possible to the same place. But during his short absence the river had risen so rapidly that he was obliged to give up all thoughts of this, and think only of securing a few of his valuables. The bit of land round his dwelling was so thickly covered with the poor cows, sheep, and other animals, that he could scarcely make his way to the house, and you may fancy his consternation on reaching it to find that the water was more than knee-deep round the walls, while a few of the cows and a whole herd of pigs had burst open the door (no

doubt accidentally) and coolly entered the dining-room, where they stood with drooping heads, very wet, and apparently very miserable. The Canadian was busy at the back of the house, loading the boat and canoe with everything he could lay hands on, and was not aware of the foreign invasion in front. Mr. Seaforth cared little for this however, and began to collect all the things he held most valuable, and threw them to the man, who stowed them away in the boat. Peter had been left in charge of the cattle, so they had to work hard. While thus employed the water continued to rise with fearful rapidity and rushed against the house like a mill-race, so that it soon became evident that the whole would ere long be swept away. Just as they finished loading the boat and canoes, the staple which held them gave way ; in a moment they were swept into the middle of the river, and carried out of sight. The Canadian was in the boat at the time the staple broke, so that Mr. Seaforth was now left in a dwelling that bid fair to emulate Noah's ark in an hour or two, without a chance of escape, and with no better company than five black oxen, in the dining-room, besides three sheep that were now scarcely able to keep their heads above water, and three little pigs that were already drowned. The poor old man did his best to push out the intruders, but only succeeded in ejecting two sheep and an ox. All the others positively refused to go, so he was fain to let them stay. By shutting the outer door he succeeded in keeping out a great deal of water. Then he waded into the parlour, where he found some more little pigs floating about and quite dead. Two, however, more adventurous than their comrades, had saved their lives by mounting first on a chair and then upon the table, where they were comfortably seated, gazing languidly at their mother, a very heavy fat sow, which sat, with what seemed an expression of settled despair, on the sofa. In a fit of wrath, Mr. Seaforth seized the young pigs and tossed them out of the window ; whereupon the old one jumped down, and half-walking, half-swimming, made her way to her companions in the dining-room. The old gentleman now ascended to the garret, where from a small window he looked out upon the scene of devastation. His chief anxiety was about the foundation of the house, which, being made of a wooden framework, like almost all the others in the colony, would certainly float if the water rose much higher. His fears were better founded than the house. As he looked up the river, which had by this time overflowed all its banks and was spreading over the plains, he saw a fresh burst of water coming down, which when it dashed against his dwelling, forced it about two yards from its foundation. Suddenly he remembered that there were a large anchor and chain in the kitchen, both of which he had brought there one day, to serve as a sort of anvil when he wanted to do some blacksmith work. Hastening down he fastened one end of the chain to the sofa, and cast the anchor out of the window. A few minutes afterwards another rush of water struck the building, which yielded to pressure, and swung slowly down until the anchor arrested its further progress. This was only for a few seconds however. The chain was a slight one. It snapped, and the house swept majestically down the stream, while its terrified owner scrambled to the roof, which he found already in possession of his favourite cat. Here he had a clear view of his situation. The plains were converted into a lake, above whose surface rose trees and houses, several of which, like his own, were floating on the stream or

stranded among shallows. Settlers were rowing about in boats and canoes in all direction, but although some of them noticed the poor man sitting beside his cat on the housetop, they were either too far off or had no time to render him assistance.

For two days nothing was heard of old Mr. Seaforth. Indeed, the settlers had too much to do in saving themselves and their families to think of others; and it was not until the third day that people began to inquire about him. His son Peter had taken a canoe and made diligent search in all directions, but although he found the house sticking on a shallow point, neither his father nor the cat was on or in it. At last he was brought to the island, on which nearly half the colony had collected, by an Indian who had passed the house and brought him away in his canoe, along with the old cat. Is he not a wonderful man, to have come through so much in his old age? and he is still so active and hearty! Mr. Swan of the mill is dead. He died of fever last week. Poor old Mr. Cordon is also gone. His end was very sad. About a month ago he ordered his horse and rode off, intending to visit Fort Garry. At the turn of the road, just above Grant's house, the horse suddenly swerved, and its rider was thrown to the ground. He did not live more than half-an-hour after it. Alas! how very sad to see a man, after escaping all the countless dangers of a long life in the woods (and his, you know, was a very adventurous one), thus cut violently down in his old age! O Charley, how little we know what is before us! How needful to have our peace made with God through Jesus Christ, so that we may be ready at any moment when our Father calls us away! There are many events of great interest that have occurred here since you left. You will be glad to hear that Jane Patterson is married to our excellent friend Mr. Cameron, who has taken up a store near to us, and intends to run a boat to York Fort next summer. There has been another marriage here which will cause you astonishment at least, if not pleasure. Old Mr. Peters has married Marie Peltier! What *could* have possessed her to take such a husband? I cannot understand it. Just think of her, Charley, a girl of eighteen, with a husband of seventy-five!—

At this point the writing, which was very close and very small, terminated. Harry laid it down with a deep sigh, wishing much that Charley had thought it advisable to send him the second sheet also. As wishes and regrets on this point were equally unavailing, he endeavoured to continue it in imagination, and was soon as deeply absorbed in following Kate through the well remembered scenes of Red River as he had been, a short time before, in roaming with her brother over the wide prairies of the Saskatchewan. The increasing cold, however, soon warned him that the night was far spent. He rose and went to the stove; but the fire had gone out, and the almost irresistible frost of these regions was already cooling everything in Bachelors' Hall down to the freezing-point. All his companions had put out their candles, and were busy, doubtless, dreaming of the friends whose letters had struck and reawakened the long-dormant chords that used to echo to the tones and scenes of other days. With a slight shiver, Harry returned to his apartment, and kneeled to thank God for protecting and preserving his absent friends, and especially for sending him "good news from a far land." The letter with the

British post-marks on it was placed under his pillow. It occupied his waking and sleeping thoughts that night, and it was the first thing he thought of and reread on the following morning, and for many mornings afterwards. Only those can fully estimate the value of such letters who live in distant lands, where letters are few—very, very few—and far between.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Changes—Harry and Hamilton find that variety is indeed charming—The latter astonishes the former considerably.

THREE months passed away, but the snow still lay deep and white and undiminished around York Fort. Winter—cold, silent, unyielding winter—still drew its white mantle closely round the lonely dwelling of the fur-traders of the Far North.

Icicles hung, as they had done for months before, from the eaves of every house, from the tall black scaffold on which the great bell hung, and from the still taller erection that had been put up as an outlook for "*the ship*" in summer. At the present time it commanded a bleak view of the frozen sea. Snow covered every housetop, and hung in ponderous masses from their edges, as if it were about to fall; but it never fell—it hung there in the same position day after day, unmelted, unchanged. Snow covered the whole land, and the frozen river, the swamps, the sea-beach, and the sea itself, as far as the eye could reach, seemed like a pure white carpet. Snow lined the upper edge of every paling, filled up the keyhole of every door, embanked about half of every window, stuck in little knobs on the top of every picket, and clung in masses on every drooping branch of the pine trees in the forest. Frost—sharp, biting frost—solidified, surrounded, and pervaded everything. Mercury was congealed by it; vapour was condensed by it; iron was cooled by it until it could scarcely be touched without (as the men expressed it) "burning" the fingers. The water-jugs in Bachelors' Hall and the water-buckets were frozen by it, nearly to the bottom; though there was a good stove there, and the Hall was not *usually* a cold place by any means. The breath of the inhabitants was congealed by it on the window-panes, until they had become coated with ice an inch thick. The breath of the men was rendered white and opaque by it, as they panted and hurried to and fro about their ordinary avocations; beating their gloved hands together, and stamping their well-wrapped-up feet on the hard-beaten snow to keep them warm. Old Robin's nose seemed to be entirely shrivelled up into his face by it, as he drove his ox-cart to the river to fetch his daily supply of water. The only things that were not affected by it were the fires, which crackled and roared as if in laughter, and twisted and leaped as if in uncontrollable glee at the bare idea of John Frost acquiring, by any artifice whatever, the smallest possible influence over *them*! Three months had elapsed, but frost and snow, instead of abating, had gone on increasing and intensifying, deepening and extending its work, and riveting its chains. Winter—cold, silent unyielding winter—still reigned at York Fort, as though it had made it a *sine qua non* of its existence at all that it should reign there for ever!

But although everything was thus wintry and cold, it was by no

means cheerless or dreary. A bright sun shone in the blue heavens with an intenseness of brilliancy that was quite dazzling to the eyes, that elated the spirits, and caused man and beast to tread with a more elastic step than usual. Although the sun looked down upon the scene with an unclouded face, and found a mirror in every icicle and in every gem of hoar-frost with which the objects of nature were loaded, there was, however, no perceptible heat in his rays. They fell on the white earth with all the brightness of midsummer, but they fell powerless as moonbeams in the dead of winter.

On the frozen river, just in front of the gate of the fort, a group of men and dogs were assembled. The dogs were four in number, harnessed to a small flat sledge of the slender kind used by Indians to drag their furs and provisions over the snow. The group of men was composed of Mr. Rogan and the inmates of Bachelors' Hall, one or two men who happened to be engaged there at the time in cutting a new water-hole in the ice, and an Indian, who, to judge from his carefully-adjusted costume, the snow-shoes on his feet, and the short whip in his hand was the driver of the sledge, and was about to start on a journey. Harry Somerville and young Hamilton were also wrapped up more carefully than usual.

"Good-bye, then, good-bye," said Mr. Rogan, advancing towards the Indian, who stood beside the leading dog, ready to start. Take care of our young friends; they've not had much experience in travelling yet; and don't over-drive your dogs. Treat them well, and they'll do more work. They're like men in that respect." Mr. Rogan shook the Indian by the hand, and the latter immediately flourished the whip and gave a shout, which the dogs no sooner heard than they uttered a simultaneous yell, sprang forward with a jerk, and scampered up the river, closely followed by their dark-skinned driver.

"Now, lads, farewell," said the old gentleman, turning with a kindly smile to our two friends, who were shaking hands for the last time with their comrades. "I'm sorry you're going to leave us, my boys. You've done your duty well while here, and I would willingly have kept you a little longer with me, but our governor wills it otherwise. However, I trust that you'll be happy wherever you may be sent. Don't forget to write to me. God bless you. Farewell."

Mr. Rogan shook them heartily by the hand, turned short round, and walked slowly up to his house, with an expression of sadness on his mild face; while Harry and Hamilton, having once more waved farewell to their friends, marched up the river side by side in silence. They followed the track left by the dog-sledge, which guided them with unerring certainty, although their Indian leader and his team were out of sight in advance.

A week previous to this time an Indian arrived from the interior, bearing a letter from headquarters, which directed that Messrs. Somerville and Hamilton should be forthwith despatched on snow-shoes to Norway House. As this establishment is about three hundred miles from the sea coast, the order involved a journey of nearly two weeks' duration through a country that was utterly destitute of inhabitants. On receiving a command from Mr. Rogan to prepare for an early start, Harry retired precipitately to his own room, and there, after cutting unheard of capers, and giving vent to sudden incomprehensible shouts, all indicative of the highest state of

delight, he condescended to tell his companions of his good fortune, and set about preparations without delay. Hamilton, on the contrary, gave his usual quiet smile on being informed of his destination, and returning somewhat pensively to Bachelors' Hall, proceeded leisurely to make the necessary arrangements for departure. As the time drew on, however, a perpetual flush on his countenance, and an unusual brilliancy about his eye, showed that he was not quite insensible to the pleasures of a change, and relished the idea more than he got credit for. The Indian who had brought the letter was ordered to hold himself in readiness to retrace his steps and conduct the young men through the woods to Norway House, where they were to await further orders. A few days later the three travellers, as already related, set out on their journey.

After walking a mile up the river, they passed a point of land which shut out the fort from view. Here they paused to take a last look, and then pressed forward in silence, the thoughts of each being busy with mingled recollections of their late home and anticipations of the future. After an hour's sharp walking they came in sight of the guide, and slackened their pace.

"Well, Hamilton," said Harry, throwing off his reverie with a deep sigh, "are you glad to leave York Fort, or sorry?"

"Glad, undoubtedly," replied Hamilton, "but sorry to part from our old companions there. I had no idea, Harry, that I loved them all so much. I feel as if I should be glad were the order for us to leave them countermanded even now."

"That's the very thought," said Harry, "that was passing through my own brain when I spoke to you. Yet somehow I think I should be uncommonly sorry after all if we were really sent back. There's a queer contradiction, Hammy: we're sorry and happy at the same time! If I were the skipper now, I would found a philosophical argument upon it."

"Which the skipper would carry on with untiring vigour," said Hamilton, smiling, "and afterwards make an entry of it in his log. But I think, Harry, that to feel the emotion of sorrow and joy at the same time is not such a contradiction as it at first appears."

"Perhaps not," replied Harry; but it seems very contradictory to me, and yet it's an evident fact, for I'm *very* sorry to leave *them*, and I'm *very* happy to have you for my companion here."

"So am I, so am I," said the other, heartily. "I would rather travel with you, Harry, than with any of our late companions, although I like them all very much."

The two friends had grown, almost imperceptibly, in each other's esteem during their residence under the same roof, more than either of them would have believed possible. The gay, reckless hilarity of the one did not at first accord with the quiet gravity and, as his comrades styled it, *softness* of the other. But character is frequently misjudged at first sight, and sometimes men who on a first acquaintance have felt repelled from each other have, on coming to know each other better, discovered traits and good qualities that ere long formed enduring bonds of sympathy, and have learned to love those whom at first they felt disposed to dislike or despise. Thus Harry soon came to know that what he at first thought and, along with his companions, called softness in Hamilton was in reality gentleness of disposition and thorough good-nature, united in one who happened

to be utterly unacquainted with the knowing ways of this peculiarly sharp and clever world, while in the course of time new qualities showed themselves in a quiet, unobtrusive way that won upon his affections and raised his esteem. On the other hand, Hamilton found that although Harry was volatile, and possessed of an irresistible tendency to fun and mischief, he never by any chance gave way to anger, or allowed malice to enter into his practical jokes. Indeed, he often observed him restrain his natural tendencies when they were at all likely to give pain, though Harry never dreamed that such efforts were known to any one but himself. Besides this, Harry was peculiarly *unselfish*, and when a man is possessed of this inestimable disposition, he is, not *quite* but *very nearly*, perfect!

After another pause, during which the party had left the open river and directed their course through the woods, where the depth of the snow obliged them to tread in each other's footsteps, Harry resumed the conversation.

"You have not yet told me, by-the-by, what old Mr. Rogan said to you just before we started. Did he give you any hint as to where you might be sent to after reaching Norway House?"

"No; he merely said he knew that clerks were wanted both for Mackenzie River and the Saskatchewan districts, but he did not know which I was destined for."

"Hum! exactly what he said to me, with the slight addition that he strongly suspected that Mackenzie River would be my doom. Are you aware, Hammy my boy, that the Saskatchewan district is a sort of terrestrial paradise, and Mackenzie River equivalent to Botany Bay?"

"I have heard as much during our conversations in Bachelors' Hall, but—Stop a bit, Harry; these snow-shoe lines of mine have got loosened with tearing through this deep snow and these shockingly thick bushes. There—they are right now; go on. I was going to say that I don't—oh!"

This last exclamation was elicited from Hamilton by a sharp blow caused by a branch which, catching on part of Harry's dress as he plodded on in front, suddenly rebounded and struck him across the face. This is of common occurrence in travelling through the woods, especially to those who from inexperience walk too closely on the heels of their companions.

"What's wrong now, Hammy?" inquired his friend, looking over his shoulder.

"Oh, nothing worth mentioning—rather a sharp blow from a branch, that's all."

"Well, proceed; you've interrupted yourself twice in what you were going to say. Perhaps it'll come out if you try it a third time."

"I was merely going to say that I don't much care where I am sent to, so long as it is not to an outpost where I shall be all alone."

"All very well, my friend; but seeing that outposts are, in comparison with principal forts, about a hundred to one, your chance of avoiding them is rather slight. However, our youth and want of experience is in our favour, as they like to send men who have seen some service to outposts. But I fear that such brilliant characters as you and I, Hammy, youth will only be an additional recommendation, and inexperience won't last long.—Hollo! what's going on yonder?"

Harry pointed as he spoke to an open spot in the woods about a

quarter of a mile in advance, where a dark object was seen lying on the snow, writhing about, now coiling into a lump, and anon extending itself like a huge snake in agony.

As the two friends looked, a prolonged howl floated towards them.

"Something wrong with the dogs, I declare!" cried Harry.

"No doubt of it," replied his friend, hurrying forward, as they saw their Indian guide rise from the ground and flourish his whip energetically, while the howls rapidly increased.

A few minutes brought them to the scene of action, where they found the dogs engaged in a fight among themselves, and the driver, in a state of vehement passion, alternately belabouring and trying to separate them. Dogs in these regions, like the dogs of all other regions, we suppose, are very much addicted to fighting—a propensity which becomes extremely unpleasant if indulged while the animals are in harness, as they then become peculiarly savage, probably from their being unable, like an ill-assorted pair in wedlock, to cut or break the ties that bind them. Moreover, they twist the traces into such an ingeniously complicated mass that it renders disentanglement almost impossible, even after exhaustion has reduced them to obedience. Besides this, they are so absorbed in worrying each other that for the time they are utterly regardless of their driver's lash or voice. This naturally makes the driver angry, and sometimes irascible men practise shameful cruelties on the poor dogs. When the two friends came up they found the Indian glaring at the animals, as they fought and writhed in the snow, with every lineament of his swarthy face distorted with passion, and panting from his late exertions. Suddenly he threw himself on the dogs again, and lashed them furiously with the whip. Finding that this had no effect, he twined the lash round his hand, and struck them violently over their heads and snouts with the handle; then falling down on his knees, he caught the most savage of the animals by the throat, and seizing its nose between his teeth almost bit it off. The appalling yell that followed this cruel act seemed to subdue the dogs, for they ceased to fight, and crouched whining, in the snow.

With a bound like a tiger young Hamilton sprang upon the guide, and seizing him by the throat, hurled him violently to the ground. "Scoundrel!" he cried, standing over the crestfallen Indian with flushed face and flashing eyes, "how dare you thus treat the creatures of God?"

The young man would have spoken more, but his indignation was so fierce that it could not find vent in words. For a moment he raised his fist, as if he meditated dashing the Indian again to the ground as he slowly arose; then, as if changing his mind, he seized him by the back of the neck, thrust him towards the panting dogs, and stood in silence over him with the whip grasped firmly in his hand, while he disentangled the traces.

This accomplished, Hamilton ordered him in a voice of suppressed anger to "go forward"—an order which the cowed guide promptly obeyed, and in a few minutes more the two friends were again alone.

"Hamilton, my boy," exclaimed Harry, who up to this moment seemed to have been petrified, "you have perfectly amazed me! I'm utterly bewildered."

"Indeed, I fear that I have been very violent," said Hamilton blushing deeply.

"Violent!" exclaimed his friend. "Why, man, I've completely mistaken your character. I—I—"

"I hope not, Harry," said Hamilton, in a subdued tone; "I hope not. Believe me, I am not naturally violent. I should be very sorry, were you to think so. Indeed, I never felt thus before, and now that it is over I am amazed at myself; but surely you'll admit that there was great provocation. Such terrible cruelty to—"

"My dear fellow, you quite misunderstand me. I'm amazed at your pluck, your energy. *Soft* indeed! we have been most egregiously mistaken. Provocation! I just think you had; my only sorrow is that you didn't give him a little more."

"Come, come, Harry; I see you would be as cruel to him as he was to the poor dog. But let us press forward; it is already growing dark, and we must not let the fellow out of sight ahead of us."

"*Allons donc*," cried Harry; and hastening their steps, they travelled silently and rapidly among the stems of the trees, while the shades of night gathered slowly round them.

That night the three travellers encamped in the snow under the shelter of a spreading pine. The encampment was formed almost exactly in a similar manner to that in which they had slept on the night of their exploits at North River. They talked less, however, than on that occasion, and slept more soundly. Before retiring to rest, and while Harry was extended, half asleep and half awake, on his green blanket, enjoying the delightful repose that follows a hard day's march and a good supper, Hamilton drew near to the Indian, who sat sullenly smoking a little apart from the young men. Sitting down beside him he administered a long rebuke in a low, grave tone of voice. Like rebukes generally, it had the effect of making the visage of the Indian still more sullen. But the young man did not appear to notice this; he still continued to talk. As he went on the look grew less and less sullen, until it faded entirely away, and was succeeded by the grave, quiet, respectful expression peculiar to the face of the North American Indian.

Day succeeded day, night followed night, and still found them plodding laboriously through the weary waste of snow, or encamping under the trees of the forest. The two friends went through all the varied stages of experience which are included in what is called "becoming used to the work," which is sometimes a modified meaning of the expression "used up." They started with a degree of vigour that one would have thought no amount of hard work could possibly abate. They became aware of the melancholy fact that fatigue unstrings the youngest and toughest sinews. They pressed on, however, from stern necessity, and found to their delight, that young muscles recover their elasticity even in the midst of severe exertion. They still pressed on, and discovered, to their dismay, that this recovery was only temporary, and that the second state was only temporary, and that the second state of exhaustion was infinitely worse than the first. Still they pressed on, and raised blisters on their feet and toes that caused them to limp wofully; then they learned that blisters break and take a long time to heal, and are much worse to walk upon during the healing process than they are at the commencement—at which time they innocently fancied that nothing could be more dreadful. Still they pressed on day after day and found to their satisfaction that such things can be endured and

overcome; that feet and toes can become hard like leather, that muscles can grow tough as india-rubber, and that spirits and energy can attain to a pitch of endurance which nothing within the compass of a day's march can by any possibility overcome. They found also from experience that their conversation changed, both in manner and subject, as they progressed on their journey. At first they conversed frequently and on various topics, chiefly on the probability of their being sent to pleasant places or the reverse. Then they spoke less frequently, and growled occasionally, as they advanced in the painful process of training. After that as they began to get hardy, they talked of the trees, the snow, the ice, the tracks of wild animals they happened to cross, and the objects of nature generally that came under their observation. Then as their muscles hardened and their sinews grew tough, and the day's march at length became first a matter of indifference, and ultimately an absolute pleasure they chatted cheerfully on any and every subject, or sang occasionally, when the sun shone out and cast an *appearance* of warmth across their path. Thus onward they pressed, without halt or stay day after day, through wood and brake, over river and lake, on ice and on snow, for miles and miles together, through the great, uninhabited, frozen wilderness.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Hopes and fears—An unexpected meeting—Philosophical talk between the hunter and the parson.

ON arriving at Norway House, Harry Somerville and his friend Hamilton found that they were to remain at that establishment during an indefinite period of time, until it should please those in whose hands their ultimate destination lay to direct them how and where to proceed. This was an unlooked-for trial of their patience; but after the first exclamation of disappointment, they made up their minds, like wise men, to think no more about it, but bide their time and make the most of present circumstances.

"You see," remarked Hamilton, as the two friends, after having had an audience of the gentleman in charge of the establishment, sauntered toward the rocks that overhung the margin of Playgreen Lake—"you see, it is of no use to fret about what we cannot possibly help. Nobody within three hundred miles of us knows where we are destined to spend next winter. Perhaps orders may come in a couple of weeks, perhaps in a couple of months, but they will certainly come at last. Anyhow, it is of no use thinking about it, so we had better forget it, and make the best of things as we find them."

"Ah!" exclaimed Harry, "your advice is, that we should by all means be happy, and if we can't be happy, be as happy as we can. Is that it?"

"Just so. That's it exactly."

"Ho! But then you see, Hammy, you're a philosopher and I'm not, and that makes all the difference. I'm not given to anticipating evil, but I cannot help dreading that they will send me to some lonely, swampy, out-of-the-way hole, where there will be no society, no shooting, no riding, no work even to speak of—nothing, in fact, but the miserable satisfaction of being styled 'bourgeois' by five or six men, wretched outcasts like myself."

"Come, Harry," cried Hamilton; "you are taking the very worst view of it. There certainly are plenty of such outposts in the country but you know very well that young fellows like you are seldom sent to such places."

"I don't know that," interrupted Harry. "There's young M'Andrew: he was sent to an outpost up the Mackenzie his second year in the service, where he was all but starved, and had to live for about two weeks on boiled parchment. Then there's poor Forrester: he was shipped off to a place—the name of which I never could remember—somewhere between the head-waters of the Athabasca Lake and the North Pole. To be sure, he had good shooting, I'm told, but he had only four labouring men to enjoy it with; and he has been there *ten* years now, and he has more than once had to scrape the rocks of that detestable stuff called *tripe de roche* to keep himself alive. And then there's—"

"Very true," interrupted Hamilton. "Then there's your friend Charles Kennedy, whom you so often talk about, and many other young fellows we know, who have been sent to the Saskatchewan, and to the Columbia, and the Athabasca, and to a host of other capital places, where they have enough of society—male society, at least—and good sport."

The young men had climbed a rocky eminence which commanded a view of the lake on the one side, and the fort with its background of woods, on the other. Here they sat down on a stone, and continued for some time to admire the scene in silence.

"Yes," said Harry, resuming the thread of discourse, "you are right: we have a good chance of seeing some pleasant parts of the country. But suspense is not pleasant. O man, if they would only send me up the Saskatchewan River! I've set my heart upon going there. I'm quite sure it's the very best place in the whole country."

"You've told the truth that time, master," said a deep voice behind them.

The young men turned quickly round. Close beside them, and leaning composedly on a long Indian fowling-piece, stood a tall broad-shouldered, sun-burned man, apparently about forty years of age. He was dressed in the usual leathern hunting-coat, cloth leggings, fur cap, mittens, and moccasins that constitute the winter garb of a hunter; and had a grave, firm, but good-humoured expression of countenance.

"You've told the truth that time master," he repeated, without moving from his place. "The Saskatchewan *is*, to my mind, the best place in the whole country; and havin' seen a considerable deal o' places in my time, I can speak from experience."

"Indeed, friend," said Harry, "I'm glad to hear you say so. Come, sit down beside us, and let's hear something about it."

Thus invited, the hunter seated himself on a stone and laid his gun on the hollow of his left arm.

"First of all, friend," continued Harry, "do you belong to the fort here?"

"No," replied the man; "I'm stayin' here just now, but I don't belong to the place."

"Where do you come from then, and what's your name?"

"Why, I've comed d'rect from the Saskatchewan with a packet o' letters. I'm payin' a visit to the missionary village yonder"—the

hunter pointed as he spoke across the lake—"and when the ice breaks up I shall get a canoe and return again."

"And your name?"

"Why, I've got four or five names. Somehow or other people have given me a nickname wherever I ha' chanced to go. But my true name, and the one I hail by just now, is Jacques Caradoc."

"Jacques Caradoc!" exclaimed Harry, starting with surprise. "You knew a Charley Kennedy in the Saskatchewan, did you?"

"That did I. As fine a lad as ever pulled a trigger."

"Give us your hand, friend," exclaimed Harry, springing forward and seizing the hunter's large, hard fist in both hands. "Why, man, Charley is my dearest friend, and I had a letter from him some time ago in which he speaks of you, and says you're one of the best fellows he ever met."

"You don't say so," replied the hunter, returning Harry's grasp warmly, while his eyes sparkled with pleasure, and a quiet smile played at the corners of his mouth.

"Yes I do," said Harry; "and I'm very nearly as glad to meet with you, friend Jacques, as I would be to meet with him. But come; it's cold work talking here. Let's go to my room; there's a fire in the stove.—Come along, Hammy;" and taking his new friend by the arm, he hurried him along to his quarters in the fort.

Just as they were passing under the fort gate, a large mass of snow became detached from a housetop and fell heavily at their feet, passing within an inch of Hamilton's nose. The young man started back with an exclamation, and became very red in the face.

"Hollo!" cried Harry, laughing, "got a fright, Hammy! That went so close to your chin that it almost saved you the trouble of shaving."

"Yes; I got a little fright from the suddenness of it," said Hamilton quietly.

"What do you think of my friend there?" said Harry to Jacques in a low voice, pointing to Hamilton, who walked on in advance.

"I've not seen much of him, master," replied the hunter. "Had I been asked the same question about the same lad twenty years ago, I should ha' said he was soft, and perhaps chicken-hearted. But I've learned from experience to judge better than I used to do. I niver thinks o' formin' an opinion o' any one till I've seen them called to sudden action. It's astonishin' how some faint-hearted men will come to face a danger and put on an awful look o' courage if they only get warnin' but take them by surprise—that's the way to try them."

"Well, Jacques, that is the very reason why I ask your opinion of Hamilton. He was pretty well taken by surprise that time, I think."

"True, master; but *that* kind o' start don't prove much. Hows'ever, I don't think he's easy upset. He does *look* uncommon soft, and his face grew red when the snow fell, but his eyebrow and his under lip showed that it wasn't from fear."

During that afternoon and the greater part of that night the three friends continued in close conversation—Harry sitting in front of the stove, with his hands in his pockets, on a chair tilted as usual on its hind legs, and pouring out volleys of questions, which were pithily answered by the good-humoured, loquacious hunter, who sat behind the stove, resting his elbows on his knees, and smoking his much-loved pipe; while Hamilton reclined on Harry's bed, and

listened with eager avidity to anecdotes and stories, which seemed, like the narrator's pipe, to be inexhaustible.

"Good-night, Jacques, good-night," said Harry, as the latter rose at last to depart; "I'm delighted to have had a talk with you. You must come back to-morrow. I want to hear more about your friend Redfeather. Where did you say you left him?"

"In the Saskatchewan, master. He said that he would wait there, as he'd heerd the missionary was comin' up to pay the Injins a visit."

"By-the-by, you're going over to the missionary's place to-morrow, are you not?"

"Yes, I am."

"Ah, then, that'll do. I'll go over with you. How far off is it?"

"Three miles or thereabouts."

"Very good. Call in here as you pass, and my friend Hamilton and I will accompany you. Good-night."

Jacques thrust his pipe into his bosom, held out his horny hand, and giving his young friends a hearty shake, turned and strode from the room.

On the following day Jacques called according to promise, and the three friends set off together to visit the Indian village. This missionary station was under the management of a Wesleyan clergyman, Pastor Conway by name, an excellent man, of about forty-five years of age, with an energetic mind and body, a bald head, a mild, expressive countenance, and a robust constitution. He was admirably qualified for his position, having a natural aptitude for every sort of work that man is usually called on to perform. His chief care was for the instruction of the Indians, whom he had induced to settle around him, in the great and all-important truths of Christianity. He invented an alphabet, and taught them to write and read their own language. He commenced the laborious task of translating the Scriptures into the Cree language; and being an excellent musician, he instructed his converts to sing in parts the psalms and Wesleyan hymns, many of which are exceedingly beautiful. A school was also established and a church built under his superintendence, so that the natives assembled in an orderly way in a commodious sanctuary every Sabbath day to worship God; while the children were instructed, not only in the Scriptures, and made familiar with the narrative of the humiliation and exaltation of our blessed Saviour, but were also taught the elementary branches of a secular education. But good Pastor Conway's energy did not stop here. Nature had gifted him with that peculiar genius which is powerfully expressed in the term "*a jack-of-all-trades*." He could turn his hand to anything; and being, as we have said, an energetic man, he *did* turn his hand to almost everything. If anything happened to get broken, the pastor could either mend it himself or direct how it was to be done. If a house was to be built for a new family of red men, who had never handled a saw or hammer in their lives, and had lived up to that time in tents, the pastor lent a hand to begin it, drew out the plan (not a very complicated thing certainly), set them fairly at work, and kept his eye on it until it was finished. In short, the worthy pastor was everything to everybody, "that by all means he might gain some."

Under such management the village flourished as a matter of course, although it did not increase very rapidly owing to the almost

unconquerable aversion of North American Indians to take up a settled habitation.

It was to this little hamlet, then, that our three friends directed their steps. On arriving, they found Pastor Conway in a sort of workshop, giving directions to an Indian who stood with a soldering-iron in one hand and a sheet of tin in the other, which he was about to apply to a curious-looking half-finished machine that bore some resemblance to a canoe.

"Ah, my friend Jacques!" he exclaimed as the hunter approached him, "the very man I wished to see. But I beg pardon, gentlemen,—strangers, I perceive. You are heartily welcome. It is seldom that I have the pleasure of seeing new friends in my wild dwelling. Pray come with me to my house."

Pastor Conway shook hands with Harry and Hamilton with a degree of warmth that evinced the sincerity of his words. The young men thanked him and accepted the invitation.

As they turned to quit the workshop, the pastor observed Jacques's eye fixed, with a puzzled expression of countenance, on his canoe.

"You have never seen anything like that before, I daresay?" said he, with a smile.

"No, sir; I never did see such a queer machine afore."

"It is a tin canoe, with which I hope to pass through many miles of country this spring, on my way to visit a tribe of Northern Indians; and it was about this very thing that I wanted to see you, my friend."

Jacques made no reply, but cast a look savouring very slightly of contempt on the unfinished canoe as they turned and went away.

The pastor's dwelling stood at one end of the village, a view of which it commanded from the back windows, while those in front overlooked the lake. It was pleasantly situated and pleasantly tenanted, for the pastor's wife was a cheerful, active little lady, like-minded with himself, and delighted to receive and entertain strangers. To her care Mr. Conway consigned the young men, after spending a short time in conversation with them; and then, requesting his wife to show them through the village, he took Jacques by the arm and sauntered out.

"Come with me, Jacques," he began; "I have somewhat to say to you. I had not time to broach the subject when I met you at the Company's fort, and have been anxious to see you ever since. You tell me that you have met with my friend Redfeather?"

"Yes, sir; I spent a week or two with him last fall. I found him stayin' with his tribe, and we started to come down here together."

"Ah, that is the very point," exclaimed the pastor, "that I wished to inquire about. I firmly believe that God has opened that Indian's eyes to see the truth; and I fully expected, from what he said when we last met, that he would have made up his mind to come and stay here."

"As to what the Almighty has done to him," said Jacques, in a reverential tone of voice, "I don't pretend to know; he did for sartin speak, and act too, in a way that I never seed an Injin do before. But about his comin' here, sir, you were quite right: he did mean to come, and I've no doubt will come yet."

"What prevented him coming with you, as you tell me he intended?" inquired the pastor.

"Well, you see, sir, he and I and his squaw, as I said, set off to

come here together ; but when we got the length o' Edmonton House, we heerd that you were comin' up to pay a visit to the tribe to which Redfeather belongs ; and so seein' that it was o' no use to come down here-away just to turn about an' go up agin, he stopped there to wait for you, for he knew you would want him to interpret—"

"Ay," interrupted the pastor, "that's true. I have two reasons for wishing to have him here. The primary one is, that he may get good to his immortal soul ; and then he understands English so well that I want him to become my interpreter ; for although I understand the Cree language pretty well now, I find it exceedingly difficult to explain the doctrines of the Bible to my people in it. But pardon me, I interrupted you."

"I was only going to say," resumed Jacques, "that I made up my mind to stay with him ; but they wanted a man to bring the winter packet here, so, as they pressed me very hard, and I had nothin' particular to do, I 'greed and came, though I would rather ha' stopped ; for Redfeather an' I ha' struck up a friendship together—a thing that I would niver ha' thought it poss'ble for me to do with a red Injin."

"And why not with a red Indian, friend?" inquired the pastor, while a shade of sadness passed over his mild features, as if unpleasant thoughts had been roused by the hunter's speech.

"Well, it's not easy to say why," rejoined the other. "I've no partic'lar objection to the red-skins. There's only one man among them that I bears a grudge agin, and even that one I'd rayther avoid than otherwise."

"But you should *forgive* him, Jacques. The Bible tells us not only to bear our enemies no grudge, but to love them and to do them good."

The hunter's brow darkened. "That's impossible, sir," he said ; "I couldn't do *him* a good turn if I was to try ever so hard. He may bless his stars that I don't want to do him mischief ; but to *love him*, it's jist imposs'ble."

"With man it is impossible, but with God *all* things are possible," said the pastor solemnly.

Jacques's naturally philosophic though untutored mind saw the force of this. He felt that God, who had formed his soul, his body, and the wonderfully complicated machinery and objects of nature, which were patent to his observant and reflective mind wherever he went, must of necessity be equally able to alter, influence, and remould them all according to His will. Common-sense was sufficient to teach him this ; and the bold hunter exhibited no ordinary amount of common-sense in admitting the fact at once, although in the case under discussion (the loving of his enemy) it seemed utterly impossible to his feelings and experience. The frown, therefore, passed from his brow, while he said respectfully, "What you say, sir, is true ; I believe though I can't *feel* it. But I s'pose the reason I niver felt much drawn to the red-skins is, that all the time I lived in the settlements I was used to hear them called and treated as theivin' dogs, an' when I com'd among them I didn't see much to alter my opinion. Here an' there I have found one or two honest Injins, an' Redfeather is as true as steel ; but the most o' them are no better than they should be. I s'pose I don't think much o' them just because they *are* red-skins."

"Ah, Jacques, you will excuse me if I say that there is not much

sense in *that* reason. An Indian cannot help being a red man any more than you can help being a white one, so that he ought not to be despised on that account. Besides, God made him what he is, and to despise the *work* of God, or to undervalue it, is to despise God himself. You may indeed despise, or rather abhor, the sins that red men are guilty of ; but if you despise *them* on this ground, you must much more despise white men, for *they* are guilty of greater iniquities than Indians are. They have more knowledge, and are therefore more inexcusable when they sin ; and any one who has travelled much must be aware that, in regard to general wickedness, white men are at least quite as bad as Indians. Depend upon it Jacques, that there will be Indians found in heaven at the last day as well as white men. God is no respecter of persons."

"I niver thought much on that subject afore, sir," returned the hunter ; "what you say seems reasonable enough. I'm sure an' sartin, any way, that if there's a red-skin in heaven at all, Redfeather will be there, an' I only hope that I may be there too to keep him company."

"I hope so, my friend," said the pastor earnestly ; "I hope so too, with all my heart. And if you will accept of this little book, it will show you how to get there."

The missionary drew a small, plainly-bound copy of the Bible from his pocket as he spoke, and presented it to Jacques, who received it with a smile, and thanked him, saying, at the same time, that he "was not much up to book-larnin', but he would read it with pleasure."

"Now, Jacques," said the pastor, after a little further conversation on the subject of the Bible, in which he endeavoured to impress upon him the absolute necessity of being acquainted with the blessed truths which it contains—"now, Jacques, about my visit to the Indians. I intend, if the Almighty spares me, to embark in yon tin canoe that you found me engaged with, and with six men to work it, proceed to the country of the Knisteneux Indians, visit their chief camp, and preach to them there as long as the weather will permit. When the season is pretty well advanced, and winter threatens to cut off my retreat, I shall re-embark in my canoe and return home. By this means I hope to be able to sow the good seed of Christian truth in the hearts of men who, as they will not come to this settlement, have no chance of being brought under the power of the gospel by any other means."

Jacques gave of his quiet smiles on hearing this. "Right, sir—right," he said with some energy ; "I have always thought, although I niver made bold to say it before, that there was not enough o' this sort o' thing. It has always seemed to me a kind o' madness (excuse my plainness o' speech, sir) in you pastors, thinkin' to make the redskins come an' settle round you like so many squaws, an' dig up an' grub at the ground, when it's quite clear that their natur' and the natur' o' things about them meant them to be hunters. An' surely since the Almighty made them hunters, he intended them to *be* hunters, an' won't refuse to make them Christians on *that* account. A red-skin's natur' is a huntin' natur', an' nothin' on arth'll ever make it anythin' else."

"There is much truth in what you observe, friend," rejoined the pastor ; "but you are not *altogether* right. Their nature *may* be

changed, although certainly nothing on *earth* will change it. Look at that frozen lake." He pointed to the wild field of thick snow-covered ice that stretched out for miles like a sheet of white marble before them. "Could anything on earth break up or sink or melt that?"

"Nothin'," replied Jacques laconically.

"But the warm beams of yon glorious sun can do it," continued the pastor, pointing upwards as he spoke, "and do it effectually too; so that, although you can scarcely observe the process, it nevertheless turns the hard, thick, solid ice into limpid water at last. So is it in regard to man. Nothing on earth can change his heart or alter his nature; but our Saviour, who is called the Sun of Righteousness, can. When he shines into a man's soul it melts. The old man becomes a little child, the wild savage a Christian. But I agree with you in thinking that we have not been sufficiently alive to the necessity of seeking to convert the Indians before trying to gather them round us. The one would follow as a natural consequence, I think, of the other, and it is owing to this conviction that I intend, as I have already said, to make a journey in spring to visit those who will not or cannot come to visit me. And now, what I want to ask is whether you will agree to accompany me as steersman and guide on my expedition."

The hunter slowly shook his head. "I'm afeard not, sir; I have already promised to take charge of a canoe for the Company. I would much rather go with you, but I must keep my word."

"Certainly, Jacques, certainly; that settles the question. You cannot go with me—unless—" the pastor paused as if in thought for a moment—"unless you can persuade them to let you off."

"Well, sir, I can try," returned Jacques.

"Do; and I need not say how happy I shall be if you succeed. Good-day, friend good-bye." So saying, the missionary shook hands with the hunter and returned to his house, while Jacques wended his way to the village in search of Harry and Hamilton.

CHAPTER XXV

Good news and romantic scenery—Bear-hunting and its results

JACQUES failed in his attempt to break off his engagement with the fur-traders. The gentleman in charge of Norway House, albeit a good-natured, estimable man was one who could not easily brook disappointment, especially in matters that involved the interests of the Hudson's Bay Company; so Jacques was obliged to hold to his compact, and the pastor had to search for another guide.

Spring came, and with it the awakening (if we may use the expression) of the country from the long, lethargic sleep of winter. The sun burst forth with irresistible power, and melted all before it. Ice and snow quickly dissolved, and set free the waters of swamp and river, lake and sea, to leap and sparkle in their new-found liberty. Birds renewed their visits to the regions of the north; frogs, at last unfrozen, opened their leathern jaws to croak and whistle in the marches; and men began their preparation for a summer campaign.

At the commencement of the season an express arrived with letters from headquarters, which, among other matters of importance,

directed that Messrs. Someville and Hamilton should be despatched forthwith to the Saskatchewan district, where, on reaching Fort Pitt, they were to place themselves at the disposal of the gentleman in charge of the district. It need scarcely be added that the young men were overjoyed on receiving this almost unhopèd-for intelligence, and that Harry expressed his satisfaction in his usual hilarious manner, asserting somewhat profanely, in the excess of his glee, that the governor-in-chief of Rupert's Lane was a "regular brick." Hamilton agreed to all his friend's remarks with a quite smile, accompanied by a slight chuckle, and a somewhat desperate attempt at a caper, which attempt, bordering as it did on a region of buffoonery into which our quite and gentlemanly friend had never dared hitherto to venture, proved an awkward and utter failure. He felt this, and blushed deeply.

It was further arranged and agreed upon that the young men should accompany Jacques Caradoc in his canoe. Having become sufficiently expert canoeemen to handle their paddles well, they scouted the idea of taking men with them, and resolved to launch boldly forth at once as *bona-fide* voyageurs. To this arrangement Jacques, after one or two trials to test their skill, agreed; and very shortly after the arrival of the express, the trio set out on their voyage, amid cheers and adieus of the entire population of Norway House, who were assembled on the end of the wooden wharf to witness their departure, and with whom they had managed, during their short residence at that place, to become special favourites. A month later, the pastor of the Indian village, having procured a trusty guide, embarked in his tin canoe with a crew of six men, and followed in their track.

In process of time spring merged into summer—a season chiefly characterised in those climes by intense heat and innumerable clouds of mosquitoes, whose vicious and incessant attacks render life, for the time being, a burden. Our three voyageurs, meanwhile, ascended the Saskatchewan, penetrating deeper each day into the heart of the North American continent. On arriving at Fort Pitt, they were graciously permitted to rest for three days, after which they were forwarded to another district, where fresh efforts were being made to extend the fur-trader into lands hitherto almost unvisited. This continuation of their travels was quite suited to the tastes and inclinations of Harry and Hamilton, and was hailed by them as an additional reason for self-gratulation. As for Jacques, he cared little to what part of the world he chanced to be sent. To hunt, to toil in rain and in sunshine, in heat and in cold, at the paddle or on the snow-shoe, was his vocation, and it mattered little to the bold hunter whether he plied it upon the plains of the Saskatchewan or among the woods of Athabasca. Besides, the companions of his travels were young, active, bold, adventurous, and therefore quite suited to his taste. Redfeather, too, his best and dearest friend, had been induced to return to his tribe for the purpose of meditating between some of the turbulent members of it and the white men who had gone to settle among them, so that the prospect of again associating with his red friend was an additional element in his satisfaction. As Charley Kennedy was also in this district, the hope of seeing him once more was a subject of such unbounded delight to Harry Somerville, and so, sympathetically, to young Hamilton, that it was with great

difficulty they could realize the full amount of their good fortune, or give adequate expression to their feelings. It is therefore probable that there never were three happier travellers than Jacques, Harry, and Hamilton, as they shouldered their guns and paddles, shook hands with the inmates of Fort Pitt, and with light steps and lighter hearts launched their canoe, and turned their bronzed faces once more to the summer sun, and dipped their paddles again in the rippling waters of the Saskatchewan River.

As their bark was exceedingly small, and burdened with but little lading, they resolved to abandon the usual route, and penetrate the wilderness through a maze of lakes and small rivers well known to their guide. By this arrangement they hoped to travel more speedily, and avoid navigating a long sweep of the river by making a number of portages; while, at the same time, the changeful nature of the route was likely to render it more interesting. From the fact of its being seldom traversed, it was also more likely that they should find a supply of game for the journey.

Towards sunset, one fine day, about two weeks after their departure from Fort Pitt, our voyageurs paddled their canoe round a wooded point of land that jutted out from, and partially concealed, the mouth of a large river, down whose stream they had dropped leisurely during the last three days, and swept out upon the bosom of a large lake. This was one of those sheets of water which glitter in hundreds on the green bosom of America's forests, and are so numerous and comparatively insignificant as to be scarce distinguished by a name, unless when they lie directly in the accustomed route of the fur-traders. But although, in comparison with the fresh-water oceans of the Far West, this lake was unnoticed and almost unknown, it would by no means have been regarded in such a light had it been transported to the plains of England. In regard to picturesque beauty, it was perhaps unsurpassed. It might be about six miles wide, and so long that the land at the farther end of it was faintly discernible on the horizon. Wooded hills, sloping gently down to the water's edge; jutting promontories, some rocky and barren, others more or less covered with trees; deep bays, retreating in some places into the dark recesses of a savage-looking gorge, in others into a distant meadow-like plain, bordered with a stripe of yellow sand; beautiful islands of various sizes, scattered along the shores as if nestling there for security, or standing barren and solitary in the centre of the lake, like bulwarks of the wilderness, some covered with luxuriant vegetation, others bald and grotesque in outline, and covered with gulls and other water-fowl,—this was the scene that broke upon the view of the travellers as they rounded the point, and ceasing to paddle, gazed upon it long and in deep silence, their hands raised to shade their eyes from the sun's rays, which sparkled in the water, and fell, here in bright spots and broken patches, and there in yellow floods, upon the rocks, the trees, the forest glades and plains around them.

"What a glorious scene!" murmured Hamilton, almost unconsciously.

"A perfect paradise!" said Harry, with a long-drawn sigh of satisfaction.—"Why, Jacques, my friend, it's a matter of wonder to me, that you a free man, without relations or friends to curb you, or attract you to other parts of the world, should go boating and canoe-

ing all over the country at the beck of the fur-traders, when you might come and pitch your tent here for ever !”

“For ever !” echoed Jacques.

“Well, I mean as long as you live in this world.”

“Ah, master,” rejoined the guide, in a sad tone of voice, “it’s just because I have neither kith nor kin nor friends to draw me to any partic’lar spot on arth, that I don’t care to settle down in this one, beautiful though it be.”

“True, true,” muttered Harry ; “man’s a gregarious animal, there’s no doubt of that.”

“Anon ?” exclaimed Jacques.

“I meant to say that man naturally loves company,” replied Harry, smiling.

“An’ yit I’ve seen some as didn’t, master ; though, to be sure, that was onnat’ral, and there’s not many o’ them, by good luck. Yes, man’s fond o’ seein’ the face o’ man.”

“And woman too,” interrupted Harry.—“Eh, Hamilton, what say you ?—

‘O woman in our hours of ease
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou.’

Alas, Hammy ! pain and anguish and everything else may wring our unfortunate brows here long enough before woman, ‘lovely woman,’ will come to our aid. What a rare sight it would be, now, to see even an ordinary house-maid or a cook out here ! It would be good for sore eyes. It seems to me a sort of horrible untruth to say that I’ve not seen a woman since I left Red River ; and yet it’s a frightful fact, for I don’t count the copper-coloured nondescripts one meets with hereabouts to be woman at all. I suppose they are, but they don’t look like it.”

“Don’t be a goose, Harry,” said Hamilton.

“Certainly not, my friend. If I were under the disagreeable necessity of being anything but what I am, I should rather be something that is not in the habit of being shot,” replied the other, paddling with renewed vigour in order to get rid of some of the superabundant spirits that the beautiful scene and brilliant weather, acting on a young and ardent nature, had called forth.

“Some of these same red-skins,” remarked the guide, “are not such bad sort o’ women, for all their ill looks. I’ve know’d more than one that was a first-rate wife an’ a good mother, though it’s true they had little edication beyond that o’ the woods.”

“No doubt of it,” replied Harry, laughing gaily. “How shall I keep the canoe’s head, Jacques ?”

“Right away for the pint that lies jist between you an’ the sun.”

“Yes ; I give them all credit for being excellent wives and mothers after a fashion,” resumed Harry. “I’ve no wish to asperse the character of the poor Indians ; but you must know, Jacques, that they’re very different from the women that I allude to and of whom Scott sung. His heroines were of a *very* different stamp and colour !”

“Did *he* sing of niggers ?” inquired Jacques simply.

“Of niggers !” shouted Harry, looking over his shoulders at

Hamilton, with a broad grin; "no, Jacques, not exactly of niggers—"

"Hist!" exclaimed the guide, with that peculiar subdued energy that at once indicates an unexpected discovery, and enjoins caution, while at the same moment, by a deep powerful back-stroke of his paddle, he suddenly checked the rapid motion of the canoe.

Harry and his friend glanced quickly over their shoulders with a look of surprise.

"What's in the wind now?" whispered the former.

"Stop paddling, masters, and look ahead at the rock yonder, jist under the tall cliff. There's a bear a-sittin' there, an' if we can only get to shore afore he see us, we're sartin sure of him."

As the guide spoke he slowly edged the canoe towards the shore, while the young men gazed with eager looks in the direction indicated, where they beheld what appeared to be the decayed stump of an old tree or a mass of brown rock. While they strained their eyes to see it more clearly, the object altered its form and position.

"So it is," they exclaimed simultaneously, in a tone that was equivalent to the remark, "Now we believe, because we see it."

In a few seconds the bow of the canoe touched the land, so lightly as to be quite inaudible, and Harry, stepping gently over the side drew it forward a couple of feet, while his companions disembarked.

"Now, Mister Harry," said the guide, as he slung a powder-horn and shot-belt over his shoulder, "we've no need to circumvent the beast, for he's circumvented his-self."

"How so?" inquired the other, drawing the shot from his fowling-piece, and substituting in its place a leaden bullet.

Jacques led the way through the somewhat thinly scattered under-wood as he replied, "You see, Mister Harry, the place where he's gone to sun hisself is jist at the foot o' a sheer precipice, which runs round ahead of him and juts out into the water, so that he's got three ways to choose between. He must clamber up the precipice, which will take him some time, I guess, if he can do it at all; or he must take to the water, which he don't like, and won't do if he can help it; or he must run out the way he went in, but as we shall go to meet him by the same road, he'll have to break our ranks before he gains the woods, an' *that'll* be no easy job."

The party soon reached the narrow pass between the lake and the near end of the cliff, where they advanced with greater caution, and peeping over the low bushes, beheld Bruin, a large brown fellow sitting on his haunches, and rocking himself slowly to and fro, as he gazed abstractedly at the water. He was scarcely within good shot, but the cover was sufficiently thick to admit of a nearer approach.

"Now, Hamilton," said Harry, in a low whisper, "take the first shot. I killed the last one, so it's your turn this time."

Hamilton hesitated, but could make no reasonable objection to this although his unselfish nature prompted him to let his friend have the first chance. However, Jacques decided the matter by saying, in a tone that savoured strongly of command, although it was accompanied with a good-humoured smile,—

"Go for'ard, young man; but you may as well put in the primin' first."

Poor Hamilton hastily rectified this oversight with a deep blush, at the same time muttering that he never *would* make a hunter; and

then advanced cautiously through the bushes, slowly followed at a short distance by his companions.

On reaching a bush within seventy yards of the bear, Hamilton pushed the twigs aside with the muzzle of his gun; his eye flashed and his courage mounted as he gazed at the truly formidable animal before him, and he felt more of the hunter's spirit within him at that moment than he would have believed possible a few minutes before. Unfortunately, a hunter's spirit does not necessarily imply a hunter's eye or hand. Having, with much care and long time, brought his piece to bear exactly where he supposed the brute's heart should be, he observed that the gun was on half-cock, by nearly breaking the trigger in his convulsive efforts to fire. By the time that this error was rectified, Bruin, who seemed to feel intuitively that some imminent danger threatened him, rose, and began to move about uneasily, which so alarmed the young hunter lest he should lose his shot that he took a hasty aim, fired, and *missed*. Harry asserted afterwards that he even missed the cliff! On hearing the loud report, which rolled in echoes along the precipice, Bruin started, and looking round with an undecided air, saw Harry step quietly from the bushes and fire, sending a ball into his flank. This decided him. With a fierce growl of pain, he scampered towards the water; then changing his mind, he wheeled round, and dashed at the cliff, up which he scrambled with wonderful speed.

"Come, Mister Hamilton, load again; quick. I'll have to do the job myself, I fear," said Jacques, as he leaned quietly on his long gun and with a half-pitying smile watched the young man, who madly essayed to recharge his piece more rapidly than it was possible for mortal man to do. Meanwhile, Harry had reloaded and fired again; but owing to the perturbation of his young spirits, and the frantic efforts of the bear to escape, he missed. Another moment, and the animal would actually have reached the top, when Jacques hastily fired, and brought it tumbling down the precipice. Owing to the position of the animal at the time he fired, the wound was not mortal; and foreseeing that Bruin would now become the aggressor, the hunter began rapidly to reload, at the same time retreating with his companions, who in their excitement had forgotten to recharge their pieces. On reaching level ground, Bruin rose, shook himself, gave a yell of anger on beholding his enemies, and rushed at them.

It was a fine sight to behold the bearing of Jacques at this critical juncture. Accustomed to bear-hunting from his youth, and utterly indifferent to consequences when danger became imminent, he saw at a glance the probabilities of the case. He knew exactly how long it would take him to load his gun, and regulated his pace so as not to interfere with that operation. His features wore their usual calm expression. Every motion of his hands was quick and sudden, yet not hurried, but performed in a way that led the beholder irresistibly to imagine that he could have done it even more rapidly if necessary. On reaching a ledge of rock that overhung the lake a few feet, he paused and wheeled about; click went the dog-head, just as the bear rose to grapple with him; another moment, and a bullet passed through the brute's heart, while the bold hunter sprang lightly on one side, to avoid the dash of the falling animal. As he did so, young Hamilton, who had stood a little behind him with an uplifted axe, ready to finish the work should Jacques's fire prove ineffective, re-

ceived Bruin in his arms, and tumbled along with him over the rock headlong into the water, from which, however, he speedily arose unhurt, spluttering and coughing, and dragging the dead bear to the shore.

"Well done, Hammy," shouted Harry, indulging in a prolonged peal of laughter when he ascertained that his friend's adventure had cost him nothing more than a ducking; "that was the most amicable loving plunge I ever saw."

"Better a cold bath in the arms of a dead bear than an embrace on dry land with a live one," retorted Hamilton, as he wrung the water out of his dripping garments.

"Most true, O sagacious diver! But the sooner we get a fire made the better; so come along."

While the two friends hastened up to the woods to kindle a fire, Jacques drew his hunting-knife, and, with doffed coat and upturned sleeves, was soon busily employed in divesting the bear of his natural garment. The carcass, being valueless in a country where game of a more palatable kind was plentiful, they left behind as a feast to the wolves. After this was accomplished and the clothes dried, they re-embarked, and resumed their journey, plying the paddles energetically in silence, as their adventure had cost them considerable loss of time.

It was late, and the stars had looked down for a full hour into the profound depths of the now dark lake ere the party reached the ground at the other side of the point, on which Jacques had resolved to encamp. Being somewhat wearied, they spent but little time in discussing supper, and partook of that meal with a degree of energy that implied a sense of duty as well as of pleasure. Shortly after, they were buried in repose, under the scanty shelter of their canoe.

CHAPTER XXVI

*An unexpected meeting, and an unexpected deer-hunt—Arrival at the outpost—
Disagreement with the natives—An enemy discovered, and a murder.*

NEXT morning they rose with the sun, and therefore also with the birds and beasts.

A wide traverse of the lake now lay before them. This they crossed in about two hours, during which time they paddled unremittingly, as the sky looked rather lowering, and they were well aware of the danger of being caught in a storm in such an egg-shell craft as an Indian canoe.

"We'll put in here now, Mister Harry," exclaimed Jacques, as the canoe entered the mouth of one of those small rivulets which are called in Scotland *burns*, and in America *creeks*; "it's like that your appetite is sharpened after a spell like that. Keep her head a little more to the left—straight for the p'int—so. It's likely we'll get some fish here if we set the net."

"I say, Jacques, is yon a cloud or a wreath of smoke above the trees in the creek?" inquired Harry, pointing with his paddle towards the object referred to.

"It's smoke, master; I've seed it for some time, and mayhap we'll find some Injins there who can give us news of the traders at Stoney Creek."



Spearing Deer on the Water.

"And, pray, how far do you think we may now be from that place?" inquired Harry.

"Forty miles, more or less."

As he spoke, the canoe entered the shallow water of the creek, and began to ascend the current of the stream, which at its mouth was so sluggish as to be scarcely perceptible to the eye. Not so, however, to the arms. The light bark, which while floating on the lake had glided buoyantly forward as if it were itself consenting to the motion, had now become apparently imbued with a spirit of contradiction, bounding convulsively forward at each stroke of the paddles, and perceptibly losing speed at each interval. Directing their course towards a flat rock on the left bank of the stream, they ran the prow out of the water and leaped ashore. As they did so the unexpected figure of a man issued from the bushes and sauntered towards the spot. Harry and Hamilton advanced to meet him, while Jacques remained to unload the canoe. The stranger was habited in the usual dress of a hunter, and carried a fowling-piece over his right shoulder. In general appearance he looked like an Indian; but though the face was burned by exposure to a hue that nearly equalled the red skins of the natives, a strong dash of pink in it, and the mass of fair hair which encircled it, proved that, as Harry paradoxically expressed it, its owner was a *white* man. He was young, considerably above the middle height, and apparently athletic. His address and language on approaching the young men put the question of his being a *white* man beyond a doubt.

"Good-morning, gentlemen," he began. "I presume that you are the party we have been expecting for some time past to reinforce our staff at Stoney Creek. Is it not so?"

To this query young Somerville, who stood in advance of his friend, made no reply, but stepping hastily forward, laid a hand on each of the stranger's shoulders, and gazed earnestly into his face, exclaiming as he did so,—

"Do my eyes deceive me? Is Charley Kennedy before me—or his ghost?"

"What! eh," exclaimed the individual thus addressed, returning Harry's gripe and stare with interest, "is it possible? no—it cannot—Harry Somerville, my old, dear, unexpected friend!"—and pouring out broken sentences, abrupt ejaculations, and incoherent questions, to which neither vouchsafed replies, the two friends gazed at and walked round each other, shook hands, partially embraced, and committed sundry other extravagances, utterly unconscious of or indifferent to the fact that Hamilton was gazing at them, open-mouthed, in a species of stupor, and that Jacques was standing by, regarding them with a look of mingled amusement and satisfaction. The discovery of this latter personage was a source of renewed delight and astonishment to Charley, who was so much upset by the commotion of his spirits, in consequence of this, so to speak, double shot, that he became rambling and incoherent in his speech during the remainder of that day, and gave vent to frequent and sudden bursts of smothered enthusiasm, in which it would appear, from the occasional muttering of the names of Redfeather and Jacques, that he not only felicitated himself on his own good fortune, but also anticipated renewed pleasure in witnessing the joyful meeting of these two worthies ere long. In fact, this meeting did take place on the following day, when

Redfeather, returning from a successful hunt, with part of a deer on his shoulders, entered Charley's tent, in which the travellers had spent the previous day and night, and discovered the guide gravely discussing venison steak before the fire.

It would be vain to attempt a description of all that the reunited friends said and did during the first twenty-four hours after their meeting: how they talked of old times, as they lay extended round the fire inside of Charley's tent, and recounted their adventures by flood and field since they last met; how they sometimes diverged into questions of speculative philosophy (as conversations *will* often diverge, whether we wish it or not), and broke short off to make sudden inquiries after old friends; how this naturally led them to talk of new friends and new scenes, until they began to forecast their eyes a little into the future; and how, on feeling that this was an uncongenial theme under present circumstances, they reverted again to the past, and by a peculiar train of conversation—to retrace which were utterly impossible—they invariably arrived at *old* times again. Having in course of the evening pretty well exhausted their powers, both mental and physical, they went to sleep on it, and resumed the colloquial *mélange* in the morning.

"And now tell me, Charley, what you are doing in this uninhabited part of the world, so far from Stoney Creek," said Harry Somerville, as they assembled round the fire to breakfast.

"That is soon explained," replied Charley. "My good friend and superior, Mr. Whyte, having got himself comfortably housed at Stoney Creek, thought it advisable to establish a sort of half outpost, half fishing-station about twenty miles below the new fort, and believing (very justly) that my talents lay a good deal in the way of fishing and shooting, sent me to superintend it during the summer months. I am, therefore, at present monarch of that notable establishment, which is not yet dignified with a name. Hearing that there were plenty of deer about twenty miles below my parish, I resolved the other day to gratify my love of sport, and at the same time procure some venison for Stoney Creek; accordingly, I took Redfeather with me, and—here I am."

"Very good," said Harry; "and can you give us the least idea of what they are going to do with my friend Hamilton and me when they get us?"

"Can't say. One of you, at any rate, will be kept at the creek, to assist Mr. Whyte; the other may, perhaps, be appointed to relieve me at the fishing for a time, while I am sent off to push the trade in other quarters. But I'm only guessing. I don't know anything definitely, for Mr. Whyte is by no means communicative."

"An' please, master," put in Jacques, "when do you please to let us off from this place? I guess the bourgeois won't be over pleased if we waste time here."

"We'll start this forenoon, Jacques. I and Redfeather shall go along with you, as I intended to take a run up to the creek about this time at any rate.—Have you the skins and dried meat packed, Redfeather?"

To this the Indian replied in the affirmative, and the others having finished breakfast, the whole party rose to prepare for departure, and set about loading their canoes forthwith. An hour later they were again cleaving the waters of the lake, with this difference in arrange-

ment, that Jacques was transferred to Redfeathers's canoe, while Charley Kennedy took his place in the stern of that occupied by Harry and Hamilton.

The establishment of which our friend Charley pronounced himself absolute monarch, and at which they arrived in the course of the same afternoon, consisted of two small log houses or huts, constructed in the rudest fashion, and without any attempt whatever at architectural embellishment. It was pleasantly situated on a small bay, whose northern extremity was sheltered from the arctic blast by a gentle rising ground clothed with wood. A miscellaneous collection of fishing apparatus lay scattered about in front of the buildings, and two men in a canoe completed the picture. The said two men and an Indian woman were the inhabitants of the place; the king himself, when present, and his prime minister, Redfeather, being the remainder of the population.

"Pleasant little kingdom that of yours, Charley," remarked Harry Somerville, as they passed the station.

"Very," was the laconic reply.

They had scarcely passed the place above a mile, when a canoe, containing a solitary Indian, was observed to shoot out from the shore and paddle hastily towards them. From this man they learned that a herd of deer was passing down towards the lake, and would be on its banks in a few minutes. He had been waiting their arrival when the canoes came in sight, and induced him to hurry out so as to give them warning. Having no time to lose, the whole party now paddled swiftly for the shore, and reached it just a few minutes before the branching antlers of the deer came in sight above the low bushes that skirted the wood. Harry Somerville embarked in the bow of the strange Indian's canoe, so as to lighten the other and enable all parties to have a fair chance. After snuffing the breeze for a few seconds, the foremost animal took the water, and commenced swimming towards the opposite shore of the lake, which at this particular spot was narrow. It was followed by seven others. After sufficient time was permitted to elapse to render their being cut off, in an attempt to return quite certain, the three canoes darted from the shelter of the over-hanging bushes, and sprang lightly over the water in pursuit.

"Don't hurry, and strike sure," cried Jacques to his young friends, as they came up with the terrified deer that now swam for their lives.

"Ay, ay," was the reply.

In another moment they shot in among the struggling group. Harry Somerville stood up, and seizing the Indian's spear, prepared to strike, while his companions directed their course towards others of the herd. A few seconds sufficed to bring him up with it. Leaning backwards a little, so as to give additional force to the blow, he struck the spear deep into the animal's back. With a convulsive struggle, it ceased to swim, its head slowly sank, and in another second it lay dead upon the water. Without waiting a moment, the Indian immediately directed the canoe towards another deer; while the remainder of the party, now considerably separated from each other, despatched the whole herd by means of axes and knives.

"Ha!" exclaimed Jacques, as they towed their booty to the shore, "that's a good stock o' meat, Mister Charles. It will help to furnish the larder for the winter pretty well."

"It was much wanted, Jacques: we've a good many mouths to feed, besides *treating* the Indians now and then. And this fellow, I think, will claim the most of our hunt as his own. We should not have got the deer but for him."

"True, true, Mister Charles. They belong to the redskin by rights, that's sartin."

After this exploit another night was passed under the trees; and at noon on the day following they ran their canoe alongside the wooden wharf at Stoney Creek.

"Good-day to you, gentlemen," said Mr. Whyte to Harry and Hamilton as they landed; "I've been looking out for you these two weeks past. Glad you've come at last, however. Plenty to do, and no time to lose. You have despatches, of course. Ah! that's right" (Harry drew a sealed packet from his bosom and presented it with a bow), "that's right. I must peruse these at once. Mr. Kennedy, you will show these gentlemen their quarters. We dine in half-an-hour." So saying, Mr. Whyte thrust the packet into his pocket, and without further remark strode towards his dwelling; while Charley, as instructed, led his friends to their new residence—not forgetting, however, to charge Redfeather to see to the comfortable lodgment of Jacques Caradoc.

"Now it strikes me," remarked Harry, as he sat down on the edge of Charley's bed, and thrust his hands doggedly deep down into his pockets, while Hamilton tucked up his sleeves and assaulted a wash-hand-basin, which stood on an unpainted wooden chair in a corner—"it strikes me that if *that's* his usual style of behaviour, old Whyte is a pleasure that we didn't anticipate."

"Don't judge from first impressions: they're often deceptive," spluttered Hamilton, stopping in his ablutions to look at his friend through a mass of soapsuds—an act which afterwards cost him a good deal of pain and a copious flow of unbidden tears.

"Right," exclaimed Charley, with an approving nod to Hamilton. "You must not judge him prematurely, Harry. He's a good-hearted fellow at bottom; and if he once takes a liking for you, he'll go through fire and water to serve you, as I know from experience."

"Which means to say *three* things," replied the implacable Harry; "first, that for all his good-heartedness *at bottom*, he never shows any of it *at top*, and is therefore like unto truth, which is said to lie at the bottom of a well—so deep, in fact, that it is never got out, and so is of use to nobody; secondly, that he is possessed of that amount of affection which is common to all mankind (to a great extent even to brutes), which prompts a man to be reasonably attentive to his friends; and thirdly, that you, Master Kennedy, enjoy the peculiar privilege of being the friend of a two-legged polar bear!"

"Were I not certain that you jest," retorted Kennedy, "I would compel you to apologize to me for insulting my friend, you rascal! But see, here's the cook coming to tell us that dinner waits. If you don't wish to see the teeth of the polar bear, I'd advise you to be smart."

Thus admonished, Harry sprang up, plunged his hands and face in the basin and dried them, broke Charley's comb in attempting to pass it hastily through his hair, used his fingers savagely as a substitute, and overtook his companions just as they entered the mess-room.

The establishment of Stoney Creek was comprized within two acres of ground. It consisted of eight or nine houses—three of which, however, alone met the eye on approaching by the lake. The “great” house, as it was termed, on account of its relative proportion to the other buildings, was a small edifice, built substantially but roughly of unsquared logs, partially whitewashed, roofed with shingles, and boasting six small windows in front, with a large door between them. On its east side, and at right angles to it, was a similar edifice, but smaller, having two doors instead of one, and four windows instead of six. This was the trading-shop and provision-store. Opposite to this was a twin building which contained the furs and a variety of miscellaneous stores. Thus were formed three sides of a square, from the centre of which rose a tall flagstaff. The buildings behind those just described were smaller and insignificant—the principal one being the house appropriated to the men; the others were mere sheds and workshops. Luxuriant forests ascended the slopes that rose behind and encircled this oasis on all sides, excepting in front, where the clear waters of the lake sparkled like a blue mirror.

On the margin of this lake the new arrivals, left to enjoy themselves as they best might for a day or two, sauntered about and chatted to their hearts’ content of things past, present, and future.

During these wanderings, Harry confessed that his opinion of Mr. Whyte had somewhat changed; that he believed a good deal of the first bad impression was attributable to his cool, not to say impolite, reception of them; and that he thought things would go on much better with the Indians if he would only try to let some of his good qualities be seen through his exterior.

An expression of sadness passed over Charley’s face as his friend said this.

“You are right in the last particular,” he said, with a sigh. “Mr. White is so rough and overbearing that the Indians are beginning to dislike him. Some of the more clearsighted among them see that in all his dealings with them he is straightforward and liberal; but there are a set of them who either don’t see this, or are so indignant at the rough speeches he often makes, and the rough treatment he often threatens, that they won’t forgive him, but seem to be nursing their wrath. I sometimes wish he was sent to a district where the Indians and traders are, from habitual intercourse, more accustomed to each other’s ways, and so less likely to quarrel.”

“Have the Indians, then, used any open threats?” asked Harry.

“No, not exactly; but through an old man of the tribe, who is well affected towards us, I have learned that there is a party among them who seem bent on mischief.”

“Then we may expect a row some day or other. That’s pleasant!—What think you, Hammy?” said Harry, turning to his friend.

“I think that it would be anything but pleasant,” he replied; “and I sincerely hope that we shall not have occasion for a row.”

“You’re not afraid of a fight, are you, Hamilton?” asked Charley.

The peculiarly bland smile with which Hamilton usually received any remark that savoured of banter overspread his features as Charley spoke, but he merely replied,—

"No, Charley, I'm not afraid."

"Do you know any of the Indians who are so anxious to vent their spleen on our worthy bourgeois?" asked Harry, as he seated himself on a rocky eminence commanding a view of the richly-wooded slopes, dotted with huge masses of rock that had fallen from the beetling cliffs behind the creek.

"Yes, I do," replied Charley; and, by the way, one of them—the ringleader—is a man with whom you are acquainted, at least by name. You've heard of an Indian called Misconna?"

"What?" exclaimed Harry with a look of surprise: "you don't mean the blackguard mentioned by Redfeather, long ago, when he told us his story on the shores of Lake Winnipeg—the man who killed Jacques's young wife?"

"The same," replied Charley.

"And does Jacques know he is here?"

"He does; but Jacques is a strange, unaccountable mortal. You remember that in the struggle described by Redfeather the trapper and Misconna had neither of them seen each other, Redfeather having felled the latter before the former reached the scene of action—a scene which, he has since told me, he witnessed at a distance, while rushing to the rescue of his wife—so that Misconna is utterly ignorant of the fact that the husband of his victim is now so near him; indeed, he does not know that she had a husband at all. On the other hand, although Jacques is aware that his bitterest enemy is within rifle-range of him at this moment, he does not know him by sight; and this morning he came to me, begging that I would send Misconna on some expedition or other, just to keep him out of his way."

"And do you intend to do so?"

"I shall do my best," replied Charley; "but I cannot get him out of the way till to-morrow, as there is to be a gathering of Indians in the hall this very day, to have a palaver with Mr. Whyte about their grievances, and Misconna wouldn't miss that for a trifle. But Jacques won't be likely to recognise him among so many; and if he does, I rely with confidence on his powers of restraint and forbearance. By the way," he continued, glancing upwards, "it is past noon, and the Indians will have begun to assemble, so we had better hasten back, as we shall be expected to help in keeping order."

So saying, he rose, and the young men returned to the fort. On reaching it they found the hall crowded with natives, who sat cross-legged around the walls, or stood in groups conversing in low tones, and to judge from the expression of their dark eyes and lowering brows, they were in extremely bad humour. They became silent and more respectful, however, in their demeanour when the young men entered the apartment and walked up to the fireplace, in which a small fire of wood burned on the hearth, more as a convenient means of rekindling the pipes of the Indians when they went out than as a means of heating the place. Jacques and Redfeather stood leaning against the wall near to it, engaged in a whispered conversation. Glancing round as he entered, Charley observed Misconna sitting a little apart by himself, and apparently buried in deep thought. He had scarcely perceived him, and nodded to several of his particular friends among the crowd, when a side door opened, and Mr. Whyte, with an angry expression on his countenance, strode up to the fire-

place, planted himself before it, with his legs apart and his hands behind him, while he silently surveyed the group.

"So," he began, "you have asked to speak with me; well, here I am. What have you to say?"

Mr. Whyte addressed the Indians in their native tongue, having, during a long residence in the country, learned to speak it as fluently as English.

For some moments there was silence. Then an old chief—the same who had officiated at the feast described in a former chapter—rose, and standing forth into the middle of the room, made a long and grave oration, in which besides a great deal that was bombastic, much that was irrelevant, and more that was utterly fabulous and nonsensical, he recounted the sorrows of himself and his tribe, concluding with a request that the great chief would take these things into consideration—the principal "*things*" being that they did not get anything in the shape of gratuities, while it was notorious that the Indians in other districts did, and that they did not get enough of goods in advance, on credit of their future hunts.

Mr. Whyte heard the old man to the end in silence; then, without altering his position, he looked round on the assembly with a frown and said, "Now listen to me; I am a man of few words. I have told you over and over again, and I now repeat it, that you shall get no gratuities until you prove yourselves worthy of them. I shall not increase your advances by so much as half an inch of tobacco till your last year's debts are scored off, and you begin to show more activity in hunting and less disposition to grumble. Hitherto you have not brought in anything like the quantity of furs that the capabilities of the country led me to expect. You are lazy. Until you become better hunters you shall have no redress from me."

As he finished, Mr. Whyte made a step towards the door by which he had entered, but was arrested by another chief, who requested to be heard. Resuming his place and attitude, Mr. Whyte listened with an expression of dogged determination, while guttural grunts of unequivocal dissatisfaction issued from the throats of several of the malcontents. The Indian proceeded to repeat a few of the remarks made by his predecessor, but more concisely, and wound up by explaining that the failure in the hunts of the previous year was owing to the will of the Great Manito, and not by any means on account of the supposed laziness of himself or his tribe."

"That is false," said Mr. Whyte; "you know it is not true."

As this was said, a murmur of anger ran round the apartment, which was interrupted by Misconna, who, apparently unable to restrain his passion, sprang into the middle of the room, and confronting Mr. Whyte, made a short and pithy speech, accompanied by violent gesticulation, in which he insinuated that if redress was not granted the white men would bitterly repent it.

During his speech the Indians had risen to their feet and drawn closer together, while Jacques and the three young men drew near their superior. Redfeather remained apart, motionless, and with his eyes fixed on the ground.

"And, pray, what dog—what miserable thieving cur are you, who dare to address me thus?" cried Mr. Whyte, as he strode, with flashing eyes, up to the enraged Indian.

Misconna clinched his teeth, and his fingers worked convulsively

about the handle of his knife, as he exclaimed, "I am no dog. The pale-faces are dogs. I am a great chief. My name is known among the braves of my tribe. It is Misconna—"

As the name fell from his lips, Mr. Whyte and Charley were suddenly dashed aside, and Jacques sprang towards the Indian his face livid, his eyeballs almost bursting from their sockets, and his muscles rigid with passion. For an instant he regarded the savage intently as he shrank appalled before him; then his colossal fist fell like lightning, with the weight of a sledge-hammer, on Misconna's forehead, and drove him against the outer door, which, giving way before the violent shock, burst from its fastenings and hinges, and fell along with the savage, with a loud crash to the ground.

For an instant every one stood aghast at this precipitate termination to the discussion, and then, springing forward in a body, with drawn knives, the Indians rushed upon the white men, who in a close phalanx, with such weapons as came first to hand, stood to receive them. At this moment Redfeather stepped forward unarmed between the belligerents, and turning to the Indians said,—

"Listen: Redfeather does not take the part of his white friends against his comrades. You know that he never failed you in the war path and he would not fail you now if your cause were just. But the eyes of his comrades are shut. Redfeather knows what they do not know. The white hunter" (pointing to Jacques) "is a friend of Redfeather. He is a friend of the Knisteneux. He did not strike because you disputed with his bourgeois: he struck because Misconna *is his mortal foe*. But the story is long. Redfeather will tell it at the council fire."

"He is right," exclaimed Jacques, who had recovered his usual grave expression of countenance, "Redfeather is right. I bear you know ill will, Injins, and I shall explain the thing myself at your council fire."

As Jacques spoke the Indians sheathed their knives, and stood with frowning brows, as if uncertain what to do. The unexpected interference of their comrade in arms, coupled with his address and that of Jacques, had excited their curiosity. Perhaps the undaunted deportment of their opponents, who stood ready for the encounter with a look of stern determination contributed a little to allay their resentment.

While the two parties stood thus confronting each other, as if uncertain how to act, a loud report was heard just outside the doorway. In another moment Mr. Whyte fell heavily to the ground, shot through the heart.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The chase—The fight—Retribution—Low spirits and good news.

THE tragical end of the consultation related in the last chapter had the effect of immediately reconciling the disputants. With the exception of four or five of the most depraved and discontented among them, the Indians bore no particular ill-will to the unfortunate principal of Stoney Creek; and although a good deal disappointed to find that he was a stern, unyielding trader, they had, in reality, no intention of coming to a serious rupture with him, much less of laying violent hands either upon master or men of the establishment.

When, therefore, they beheld Mr. Whyte weltering in his blood at their feet, a sacrifice to the ungovernable passion of Misconna, who was by no means a favourite among his brethren, their temporary anger was instantly dissipated, and a feeling of deepest indignation roused in their bosoms against the miserable assassin who had perpetrated the base and cowardly murder. It was therefore with a yell of rage that several of the band, immediately after the victim fell, sprang into the woods in hot pursuit of him whom they now counted their enemy. They were joined by several men belonging to the fort who had hastened to the scene of action on hearing that the people in the hall were likely to come to blows. Redfeather was the first who had bounded like a deer into the woods in pursuit of the fugitive. Those who remained assisted Charley and his friends to convey the body of Mr. Whyte into an adjoining room, where they placed him on a bed. He was quite dead, the murderer's aim having been terribly true.

Finding that he was past all human aid, the young men returned to the hall, which they entered just as Redfeather glided quickly through the open doorway, and approaching the group, stood in silence beside them, with his arms folded on his breast.

"You have something to tell, Redfeather," said Jacques, in a subdued tone, after regarding him a few seconds. "Is the scoundrel caught?"

"Misconna's foot is swift," replied the Indian, "and the wood is thick. It is wasting time to follow him through the bushes."

"What would you advise, then?" exclaimed Charley, in a hurried voice. "I see that you have some plan to propose."

"The wood is thick," answered Redfeather, "but the lake and the river are open. Let one party go by the lake, and one party by the river."

"That's it that's it, Injin," interrupted Jacques, energetically; "yer wits are always jumpin'. By crossin' over to Duck River, we can start at a point five or six miles above the lower fall; an' as it's thereabouts he must cross, we'll be time enough to catch him. If he tries the lake the other party'll fix him there; an' he'll be soon pocked up if he tries to hide in the bush."

"Come, then; we'll all give chase at once," cried Charley, feeling a temporary relief in the prospect of energetic action from the depressing effects of the calamity that had so suddenly befallen him in the loss of his chief and friend.

Little time was needed for preparation. Jacques, Charley, and Harry proceeded by the river: while Redfeather and Hamilton, with a couple of men, launched their canoe on the lake, and set off in pursuit.

Crossing the country for about a mile, Jacques led his party to the point on the Duck River to which he had previously referred. Here they found two canoes, into one of which the guide stepped with one of the men, a Canadian, who had accompanied them, while Harry and Charley embarked in the other. In a few minutes they were rapidly descending the stream.

"How do you mean to act, Jacques?" inquired Charley, as he paddled alongside of the guide's canoe. "Is it not likely that Misconna may have crossed the river already? in which case we shall have no chance of catching him."

"Niver fear," returned Jacques. "He must have longer legs than most men if he gets to the flat-rock fall before us, an' as that's the spot where he'll nat'rally cross the river, being the only straight line for the hills that escapes the bend o' the bay to the south o' Stoney Creek, we're pretty sartin to stop him there."

"True; but that being as you say, the *natural* route, don't you think it likely he'll expect that it will be guarded, and avoid it accordingly?"

"He *would* do so, Mister Charles, if he thought we were *here*; but there are two reasons agin this. He thinks that he's got the start o' us, an' won't need to double by way o' deceivin' us; and then he knows that the whole tribe is after him, and consekintly won't take a long road when there's a short one, if he can help it. But here's the rock. Look out, Mister Charles. We'll have to run the fall, which isn't very big just now, and then hide in the bushes at the foot of it till the blackguard shows himself. Keep well to the right, an' don't mind the big rock; the rush o' water takes you clear o' that without trouble."

With this concluding piece of advice, he pointed to the fall, which plunged over a ledge of rock about half-a-mile ahead of them, and which was distinguishable by a small column of white spray that rose out of it. As Charley beheld it his spirits rose, and forgetting for a moment the circumstances that called him there, he cried out,—

"I'll run it before you, Jacques. Hurrah! Give way, Harry!" and in spite of a remonstrance from the guide, he shot the canoe ahead, gave vent to another reckless shout, and flew, rather than glided, down the stream. On seeing this, the guide held back, so as to give him sufficient time to take the plunge ere he followed. A few strokes brought Charley's canoe to the brink of the fall, and Harry was just in the act of raising himself in the bow to observe the position of the rocks, when a shout was heard on the bank close beside them. Looking up they beheld an Indian emerge from the forest, fit an arrow to his bow, and discharge it at them. The winged messenger was truly aimed; it whizzed through the air and transfixed Harry Somerville's left shoulder just at the moment they swept over the fall. The arrow completely incapacitated Harry from using his arm, so that the canoe, instead of being directed into the broad current, took a sudden turn, dashed in among a mass of broken rocks, between which the water foamed with violence, and upset. Here the canoe stuck fast, while its owners stood up to their waists in the water, struggling to set it free—an object which they were the more anxious to accomplish that its stern lay directly in the spot where Jacques would infallibly descend. The next instant their fears were realized. The second canoe glided over the cataract, dashed violently against the first, and upset, leaving Jacques and his man in a similar predicament. By their aid, however, the canoes were more easily righted, and embarking quickly they shot forth again, just as the Indian, who had been obliged to make a detour in order to get within range of their position, reappeared on the banks above, and sent another shaft after them—fortunately, however, without effect.

"This is unfortunate," muttered Jacques, as the party landed and endeavoured to wring some of the water from their dripping clothes;

"an' the worst of it is that our guns are useless after sich a duckin', an' the varmint knows that, an' will be down on us in a twinklin'."

"But we are four to one," exclaimed Harry. "Surely we don't need to fear much from a single enemy."

"Humph!" ejaculated the guide, as he examined the lock of his gun. "You've had little to do with Injins, that's plain. You may be sure he's not alone, an' the reptile has a bow with arrows enough to send us all on a pretty long journey. But we've the trees to dodge behind. If I only had *one* dry charge!" and the disconcerted guide gave a look, half of perplexity, half of contempt, at the dripping gun.

"Never mind," cried Charley; "we have our paddles. But I forgot, Harry, in all this confusion, that you are wounded, my poor fellow. We must have it examined before doing anything further."

"Oh, it's nothing at all—a mere scratch, I think; at least I feel very little pain."

As he spoke the twang of a bow was heard, and an arrow flew past Jacques's ear.

"Ah, so soon!" exclaimed that worthy, with a look of surprise, as if he had unexpectedly met with an old friend. Stepping behind a tree, he motioned to his friends to do likewise; an example which they followed somewhat hastily on beholding the Indian who had wounded Harry step from the cover of the underwood and deliberately let fly another arrow, which passed through the hair of the Canadian they had brought with them.

From the several trees behind which they had leaped for shelter they now perceived that the Indian with the bow was Misconna, and that he was accompanied by eight others, who appeared, however, to be totally unarmed; having, probably, been obliged to leave their weapons behind them, owing to the abruptness of their flight. Seeing that the white men were unable to use their guns, the Indians assembled in a group, and from the hasty, and violent gesticulations of some of the party, especially of Misconna, it was evident that a speedy attack was intended.

Observing this, Jacques coolly left the shelter of his tree, and going up to Charley, exclaimed "Now, Mister Charles, I'm goin' to run away, so you'd better come along with me."

"That I certainly will not. Why, what do you mean?" inquired the other, in astonishment.

"I mean that these stupid red-skins can't make up their minds what to do, an' as I've no notion o' stoppin' here all day, I want to make them do what will suit us best. You see, if they scatter through the wood and attack us on all sides, they may give us a deal o' trouble, and git away after all; whereas, if we run away, they'll bolt after us in a body, and then we can take them in hand all at once, which'll be more comfortable-like, an' easier to manage."

As Jacques spoke they were joined by Harry and the Canadian; and being observed by the Indians thus grouped together, another arrow was sent among them.

"Now, follow me," said Jacques, turning round with a loud howl and running away. He was closely followed by the others. As the guide had predicted, the Indians no sooner observed this than they rushed after them in a body, uttering horrible yells.

"Now, then; stop here; down with you."

Jacques instantly crouched behind a bush, while each of the party

did the same. In a moment the savages came shouting up, supposing that the white men were still running on in advance. As the foremost, a tall, muscular fellow, with the agility of a panther, bounded over the bush behind which Jacques was concealed, he was met with a blow from the guide's fist, so powerfully delivered into the pit of his stomach that it sent him violently back into the bush, where he lay insensible. This event, of course, put a check upon the headlong pursuit of the others, who suddenly paused, like a group of infuriated tigers unexpectedly balked of their prey. The hesitation, however, was but for a moment. Misconna, who was in advance, suddenly drew his bow again, and let fly an arrow at Jacques, which the latter dexterously avoided; and while his antagonist lowered his eyes for an instant to fit another arrow to the string, the guide, making use of his paddle as a sort of javelin, threw it with such force and precision that it struck Misconna directly between the eyes and felled him to the earth. In another instant the two parties rushed upon each other, and a general *mêlée* ensued, in which the white men, being greatly superior to their adversaries in the use of their fists, soon proved themselves more than a match for them all although inferior in numbers. Charley's first antagonist, making an abortive attempt to grapple with him, received two rapid blows, one on the chest and the other on the nose, which knocked him over the bank into the river, while his conqueror sprang upon another Indian. Harry, having unfortunately selected the biggest savage of the band as his special property, rushed upon him and dealt him a vigorous blow on the head with his paddle.

The weapon, however, was made of light wood, and instead of felling him to the ground, broke into shivers. Springing upon each other, they immediately engaged in a fierce struggle, in which poor Harry learned, when too late, that his wounded shoulder was almost powerless. Meanwhile, the Canadian having been assaulted by three Indians at once, floored one at the onset, and immediately began an impromptu war-dance round the other two, dealing them occasionally a kick or a blow, which would speedily have rendered them *hors de combat*, had they not succeeded in closing upon him, when all three fell heavily to the ground. Jacques and Charley having succeeded in overcoming their respective opponents, immediately hastened to his rescue. In the meantime, Harry and his foe had struggled to a considerable distance from the others, gradually edging towards the river's bank. Feeling faint from his wound, the former at length sank under the weight of his powerful antagonist, who endeavoured to thrust him over a kind of cliff which they had approached. He was on the point of accomplishing his purpose, when Charley and his friends perceived Harry's imminent danger, and rushed to the rescue. Quickly though they ran, however, it seemed likely that they would be too late. Harry's head already overhung the bank, and the Indian was endeavouring to loosen the grip of the young man's hand from his throat, preparatory to tossing him over, when a wild cry rang through the forest, followed by the reports of a double-barrelled gun, fired in quick succession. Immediately after, young Hamilton bounded like a deer down the slope, seized the Indian by the legs, and tossed him over the cliff, where he turned a complete somersault in his descent, and fell with a sounding splash into the water.

"Well done, cleverly done, lad!" cried Jacques, as he and the rest

of the party came up and crowded round Harry, who lay in a state of partial stupor on the bank.

At this moment Redfeather hastily but silently approached; his broad chest heaving heavily, and his expanded nostrils quivering with the exertions he had made to reach the scene of action in time to succour his friends.

"Thank God," said Hamilton, softly, as he kneeled beside Harry and supported his head, while Charley bathed his temples—"Thank God that I have been in time! Fortunately I was walking by the river considerably in advance of Redfeather, who was bringing up the canoe, when I heard the sounds of the fray, and hastened to your aid."

At this moment Harry opened his eyes, and saying faintly that he felt better, allowed himself to be raised to a sitting posture, while his coat was removed and his wound examined. It was found to be a deep flesh-wound in the shoulder, from which a fragment of the broken arrow still protruded.

"It's a wonder to me, Mister Harry, how ye held on to that big thief so long," muttered Jacques, as he drew out the splinter and bandaged up the shoulder. Having completed the surgical operation after a rough fashion, they collected the defeated Indians. Those of them that were able to walk were bound together by the wrists and marched off to the fort, under a guard which was strengthened by the arrival of several of the fur-traders, who had been in pursuit of the fugitives, and were attracted to the spot by the shouts of the combatants. Harry, and such of the party as were more or less severely injured, were placed in canoes and conveyed to Stoney Creek by the lake, into which Duck River runs at the distance of about half-a-mile from the spot on which the skirmish had taken place. Misconna was among the latter.

On arriving at Stoney Creek, the canoe party found a large assemblage of the natives awaiting them on the wharf, and no sooner did Misconna land than they advanced to seize him.

"Keep back, friends," cried Jacques, who perceived their intentions, and stepped hastily between them.—"Come here, lads," he continued, turning to his companions; "surround Misconna. He is *our* prisoner, and must ha' fair justice done him, according to white law."

They fell back in silence on observing the guide's determined manner; but as they hurried the wretched culprit towards the house, one of the Indians pressed close upon their rear, and before any one could prevent him, dashed his tomahawk into Misconna's brain. Seeing that the blow was mortal, the traders ceased to offer any further opposition; and the Indians rushing upon his body, bore it away amid shouts and yells of execration to their canoes, to one of which the body was fastened by a rope, and dragged through the water to a point of land that jutted out into the lake near at hand. Here they lighted a fire and burned it to ashes.

There seems to be a period in the history of every one when the fair aspect of the world is darkened—when everything, whether past, present, or future, assumes a hue of the deepest gloom; a period when, for the first time, the sun, which has shewn in the mental firmament with more or less brilliancy from childhood upwards entirely disappears behind a cloud of thick darkness, and leaves the

soul in a state of deep melancholy ; a time when feelings somewhat akin to despair pervade us, as we begin gradually to look upon the past as a bright, happy vision, out of which we have at last awakened to view the sad realities of the present, and look forward with sinking hope to the future. Various are the causes which produce this, and diverse the effects of it on differently constituted minds ; but there are few, we apprehend, who have not passed through the cloud in one or other of its phases, and who do not feel that this *first* period of prolonged sorrow is darker, and heavier, and worse to bear, than many of the more truly grievous afflictions that sooner or later fall to the lot of most men.

Into a state of mind somewhat similar to that which we have endeavoured to describe our friend Charley Kennedy fell immediately after the events just narrated. The sudden and awful death of his friend Mr. Whyte fell upon his young spirit, unaccustomed as he was to scenes of bloodshed and violence, with overwhelming power. From the depression, however, which naturally followed he would probably soon have rallied had not Harry Somerville's wound in the shoulder taken an unfavourable turn, and obliged him to remain for many weeks in bed, under the influence of a slow fever ; so that Charley felt a desolation creeping over his soul that no effort he was capable of making could shake off. It is true he found both occupation and pleasure in attending upon his sick friend ; but as Harry's illness rendered great quiet necessary, and as Hamilton had been sent to take charge of the fishing-station mentioned in a former chapter, Charley was obliged to indulge his gloomy reveries in silence. To add to his wretchedness, he received a letter from Kate about a week after Mr. Whyte's burial, telling him of the death of his mother.

Meanwhile, Redfeather and Jacques—both of whom, at their young master's earnest solicitation, agreed to winter at Stoney Creek—cultivated each other's acquaintance sedulously. There were no books of any kind at the outpost, excepting three Bibles—one belonging to Charley, and one to Harry, the third being that which had been presented to Jacques by Mr. Conway the missionary. This single volume, however, proved to be an ample library to Jacques and his Indian friend. Neither of these sons of the forest was much accustomed to reading, and neither of them would have for a moment entertained the idea of taking to literature as a pastime ; but Redfeather loved the Bible for the sake of the great truths which he discovered in its inspired pages, though much of what he read was to him mysterious and utterly incomprehensible. Jacques, on the other hand, read it, or listened to his friend, with that philosophic gravity of countenance and earnestness of purpose which he displayed in regard to everything ; and deep, serious, and protracted were the discussions they plunged into, as night after night they sat on a log, with the Bible spread out before them, and read by the light of the blazing fire in the men's house at Stoney Creek. Their intercourse, however, was brought to an abrupt conclusion by the unexpected arrival, one day, of Mr. Conway the missionary, in his tin canoe. This gentleman's appearance was most welcome to all parties. It was like a bright ray of sunshine to Charley to meet with one who could fully sympathise with him in his present sorrowful frame of mind. It was an event of some consequence to Harry Somerville, inasmuch as it provided him with an amateur doctor who really understood

somewhat of his physical complaint, and was able to pour balm, at once literally and spiritually, into his wounds. It was an event productive of the liveliest satisfaction to Redfeather, who now felt assured that his tribe would have those mysteries explained which he only imperfectly understood himself; and it was an event of much rejoicing to the Indians themselves, because their curiosity had been not a little roused by what they heard of the doings and sayings of the white missionary, who lived on the borders of the great lake. The only person, perhaps, on whom Mr. Conway's arrival acted with other than a pleasing influence was Jacques Caradoc. This worthy, although glad to meet with a man whom he felt inclined both to love and respect, was by no means gratified to find that his friend Redfeather had agreed to go with the missionary on his visit to the Indian tribe, and thereafter to accompany him to the settlement on Playgreen Lake. But with the stoicism that was natural to him, Jacques submitted to circumstances which he could not alter, and contented himself with assuring Redfeather that if he lived till next spring he would most certainly "make tracks for the great lake," and settle down at the missionary's station along with him. This promise was made at the end of the wharf of Stoney Creek the morning on which Mr. Conway and his party embarked in their tin canoe—the same tin canoe at which Jacques had curled his nose contemptuously when he saw it in process of being constructed, and at which he did not by any means curl it the less contemptuously now that he saw it finished. The little craft answered its purpose marvellously well, however, and bounded lightly away under the vigorous strokes of its crew, leaving Charlie and Jacques on the pier gazing wistfully after their friends, and listened sadly to the echoes of their parting song, as it floated more and more faintly over the lake.

Winter came, but no ray of sunshine broke through the dark cloud that hung over Stoney Creek. Harry Somerville, instead of becoming better, grew worse and worse every day, so that when Charley despatched the winter packet, he represented the illness of his friend to the powers at headquarters as being of a nature that required serious and immediate attention and change of scene. But the word *immediate* bears a slightly different signification in the backwoods to what it does in the lands of railroads and steamboats. The letter containing this hint took many weeks to traverse the waste wilderness to its destination; months passed before the reply was written, and many weeks more elapsed ere its contents were perused by Charley and his friend. When they did read it, however, the dark cloud that had hung over them so long burst at last; a ray of sunshine streamed down brightly upon their hearts, and never forsook them again, although it did lose a little of its brilliancy after the first flash. It was on a rich, dewy, cheerful morning in early spring when the packet arrived, and Charley led Harry, who was slowly recovering his wonted health and spirits, to their favourite rocky resting-place on the margin of the lake. Here he placed the letter in his friend's hand with a smile of genuine delight. It ran as follows:—

MY DEAR SIR,—Your letter containing the account of Mr. Somerville's illness has been forwarded to me, and I am instructed to inform you that leave of absence for a short time has been granted to him. I have had a conversation with the doctor here, who advises

me to recommend that, if your friend has no other summer residence in view, he should spend part of his time in Red River settlement. In the event of his agreeing to this, I would suggest that he should leave Stoney Creek with the first brigade in spring, or by express canoe if you think it advisable.—I am, etc.

"Short but sweet—uncommonly sweet," said Harry, as a deep flush of joy crimsoned his pale cheeks, while his own merry smile, that had been absent for many a weary day, returned once more to its old haunt, and danced round its accustomed dimples like a repentant wanderer who has been long absent from and has at last returned to his native home.

"Sweet indeed!" echoed Charley. "But that's not all; here's another lump of sugar for you." So saying, he pulled a letter from his pocket, unfolded it slowly, spread it out on his knee, and, looking up at his expectant friend, winked.

"Go on, Charley; pray don't tantalize me."

"Tantalize you! My dear fellow, nothing is farther from my thoughts. Listen to this paragraph in my dear old father's letter:—

"So you see, my dear Charley, that we have managed to get you appointed to the charge of Lower Fort Garry, and as I hear that poor Harry Somerville is to get leave of absence, you had better bring him along with you. I need not add that my house is at his service as long as he may wish to remain in it."

"There! what think ye of that, my boy?" said Charley, as he folded the letter and returned it to his pocket.

"I think," replied Harry, "that your father is a dear old gentleman and I hope that you'll only be half as good when you come to his time of life; and I think I'm so happy to-day that I'll be able to walk without the assistance of your arm to-morrow; and I think we had better go back to the house now, for I feel, oddly enough, as tired as if I had had a long walk. Ah, Charley, my dear fellow, that letter will prove to be the best doctor I have had yet. But now tell me what you intend to do."

Charley assisted his friend to rise, and led him slowly back to the house as he replied,—

"Do, my boy? that's soon said. I'll make things square and straight at Stoney Creek. I'll send for Hamilton and make him interim commander-in-chief. I'll write two letters—one to the gentleman in charge of the district, telling him of my movements; the other (containing a screed of formal instructions) to the miserable mortal who shall succeed me here. I'll take the best canoe in our store, load it with provisions, put you carefully in the middle of it, stick Jacques in the bow and myself in the stern, and start, two weeks hence, neck and crop, head over heels, through thick and thin, wet and dry, over portage, river, fall, and lake, for Red River settlement!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Old friends and scenes—Coming events cast their shadows before.

MR KENNEDY, senior, was seated in his own comfortable arm-chair before the fire, in his own cheerful little parlour, in his own snug house, at Red River, with his own highly characteristic breakfast of

buffalo steaks, tea, and pemmican before him, and his own beautiful, affectionate daughter Kate presiding over the tea-pot, and exercising unwarrantably despotic sway over a large grey cat whose sole happiness seemed to consist in subjecting Mr. Kennedy to perpetual annoyance, and whose main object in life was to catch its master and mistress off their guard, that it might go quietly to the table, the meat-safe, or the pantry, and there—deliberately—steal!

Kate had grown very much since we saw her last. She was quite a woman now, and well worthy of a minute description here, but we never could describe a woman to our own satisfaction. We have frequently tried and failed; so we substitute, in place, the remarks of Kate's friends and acquaintances about her—a criterion on which to form a judgment that is a pretty correct one, especially when the opinion pronounced happens to be favourable. Her father said she was an angel, and the only joy of his life. This latter expression, we may remark, was false; for Mr. Kennedy frequently said to Kate, confidentially, that Charley was a great happiness to him; and we are quite sure that the pipe had something to do with the felicity of his existence. But the old gentleman *said* that Kate was the *only* joy of his life, and that is all we have to do with at present. Several ill-tempered old ladies in the settlement said that Miss Kennedy was really a quiet, modest girl—testimony this (considering the source whence it came) that was quite conclusive. Then old Mr. Grant remarked to old Mr. Kennedy, over a confidential pipe, that Kate was certainly, in his opinion, the most modest and the prettiest girl in Red River. Her old school companions called her a darling. Tom Whyte said "he never see'd nothink like her nowhere." The clerks spoke of her in terms too glowing to remember; and the last arrival among them, the youngest, with the slang of the "old country fresh on his lips, called her a *stunner*! Even Mrs. Grant got up one of her half-expressed remarks about her, which everybody would have supposed to be quizzical in its nature, were it not for the frequent occurrence of the terms "good girl," "innocent creature," which seemed to contradict that idea. There were also one or two hapless swains who *said* nothing, but what they *did* and *looked* was in itself unequivocal. They went quietly into a state of slow, drivelling imbecility whenever they happened to meet with Kate; looked as if they had become shockingly unwell, and were rather pleased than otherwise that their friends should think so too; and upon all and every occasion in which Kate was concerned, conducted themselves with an amount of insane stupidity (although sane enough at other times) that nothing could account for, save the idea that their admiration of her was inexpressible, and that *that* was the most effective way in which they could express it.

"Kate, my darling," said Mr. Kennedy, as he finished the last mouthful of tea, "wouldn't it be capital to get another letter from Charley?"

"Yes, dear papa, it would indeed. But I am quite sure that the next time we shall hear from him will be when he arrives here, and makes the house ring with his own dear voice."

"How so, girl?" said the old trader, with a smile. It may as well be remarked here that the above opening of conversation was by no means new; it was stereotyped now. Ever since Charley had been appointed to the management of Lower Fort Garry, his father had

been so engrossed by the idea, and spoke of it to Kate so frequently, that he had got into a way of feeling as if the event so much desired would happen in a few days, although he knew quite well that it could not, in the course of ordinary or extra-ordinary circumstances, occur in less than several months. However, as time rolled on he began regularly, every day or two, to ask Kate questions about Charley that she could not by any possibility answer, but which he knew from experience would lead her into a confabulation about his son, which helped a little to allay his impatience.

"Why, you see, father," she replied, "it is three months since we got his last, and you know there has been no opportunity of forwarding letters from Stoney Creek since it was despatched. Now the next opportunity that occurs—"

"Mee-aow!" interrupted the cat, which had just finished two pats of fresh butter without being detected, and began, rather recklessly, to exult.

"Hang that cat!" cried the old gentleman angrily, "it'll be the death o' me yet;" and seizing the first thing that came to hand, which happened to be the loaf of bread, discharged it with such violence, and with so correct an aim, that it knocked, not only the cat, but the tea-pot and sugar-bowl also, off the table.

"O dear papa!" exclaimed Kate.

"Really, my dear," cried Mr. Kennedy, half angry and half ashamed "we must get rid of that brute immediately. It has scarcely been a week here, and it has done more mischief already than a score of ordinary cats would have done in a twelvemonth."

"But then, the mice, papa—"

"Well, but—but—oh, hang the mice!"

"Yes; but how are we to catch them?" said Kate.

At this moment the cook, who had heard the sound of breaking crockery and judged it expedient that he should be present, opened the door.

"How now, rascal!" exclaimed his master, striding up to him. "Did I ring for you, eh?"

"No, sir; but—"

"But! eh, but! no more 'buts,' you scoundrel, else I'll—"

The motion of Mr. Kennedy's fist warned the cook to make a precipitate retreat, which he did at the same moment that the cat resolved to run for its life. This caused them to meet in the doorway, and making a compound entanglement with the mat, they both fell into the passage with a loud crash. Mr. Kennedy shut the door gently, and returned to his chair, patting Kate on the head as he passed.

"Now, darling, go on with what you were saying; and don't mind the tea-pot—let it lie."

"Well," resumed Kate, with a smile, "I was saying that the next opportunity Charley can have will be by the brigade in spring, which we expect to arrive here, you know, a month hence; but we won't get a letter by that, as I feel convinced that he and Harry will come by it themselves."

"And the express canoe Kate—the express canoe," said Mr. Kennedy, with a contortion of the left side of his head that was intended for a wink; "you know they got leave to come by express, Kate."

"Oh, as to the express, father, I don't expect them to come by that, as poor Harry Somerville has been so ill that they would never think of venturing to subject him to all the discomforts, not to mention the dangers, of a canoe voyage."

"I don't know that, lass—I don't know that," said Mr. Kennedy, giving another contortion with his left cheek. "In fact, I shouldn't wonder if they arrived this very day; and it's well to be on the look-out, so I'm off to the banks of the river, Kate." Saying this, the old gentleman threw on an old fur cap with the peak all awry, thrust his left hand into his right glove, put on the other with the back to the front and the thumb in the middle finger, and bustled out of the house, muttering as he went, "Yes, it's well to be on the look-out for him."

Mr. Kennedy, however, was disappointed; Charlie did not arrive that day, nor the next, nor the day after that. Nevertheless, the old gentleman's faith each day remained as firm as on the day previous that Charley would arrive on *that* day "for certain." About a week after this, Mr. Kennedy put on his hat and gloves as usual, and sauntered down to the banks of the river, where his perseverance was rewarded by the sight of a small canoe rapidly approaching the landing-place. From the costume of the three men who propelled it, the cut of the canoe itself, the precision and energy of its movements, and several other minute points about it only apparent to the accustomed eye of a nor'-wester, he judged at once that this was a new arrival, and not merely one of the canoes belonging to the settlers, many of which might be seen passing up and down the river. As they drew near he fixed his eyes eagerly upon them.

"Very odd," he exclaimed, while a shade of disappointment passed over his brow: "it ought to be him, but it's not like him; too big—different nose altogether. Don't know any of the three. Humph!—well, he's *sure* to come to-morrow, at all events." Having come to the conclusion that it was not Charlie's canoe, he wheeled suddenly round and sauntered back towards his house, intending to solace himself with a pipe. At that moment he heard a shout behind him, and ere he could well turn round to see whence it came, a young man bounded up the bank and seized him in his arms with a hug that threatened to dislocate his ribs. The old gentlemen's first impulse was to bestow on his antagonist (for he verily believed him to be such) one of those vigorous touches with his clinched fist which in days of yore used to bring some of his disputes to a summary and effectual close; but his intention changed when the youth spoke.

"Father, dear, dear father!" said Charley, as he loosened his grasp, and, still holding him by both hands, looked earnestly into his face with swimming eyes.

Old Mr. Kennedy seemed to have lost his powers of speech. He gazed at his son for a few seconds in silence, then suddenly threw his arms around him and engaged in a species of wrestle which he intended for an embrace.

"O Charley, my boy!" he exclaimed, "you've come at last—God bless you! Let's look at you. Quite changed: six feet; no, not quite changed—the old nose; black as an Indian. O Charley, my dear boy! I've been waiting for you for months; why did you keep me waiting so long, eh? Hang it, where's my handkerchief?" At this last exclamation Mr. Kennedy's feelings quite overcame him;

his full heart overflowed at his eyes, so that when he tried to look at his son, Charley appeared partly magnified and partly broken up into fragments. Fumbling in his pocket for the missing handkerchief, which he did not find, he suddenly seized his fur cap, in a burst of exasperation, and wiped his eyes with that. Immediately after, forgetting that it *was* a cap, he thrust it into his pocket.

"Come, dear father," cried Charley, drawing the old man's arm through his, "let us go home. Is Kate there?"

"Ay, ay," cried Mr. Kennedy, waving his hand as he was dragged away, and bestowing, quite unwittingly, a back-handed slap on the cheek to Harry Somerville, which nearly felled that youth to the ground. "Ay, ay! Kate to be sure, darling. Yes, quite right, Charley; a pipe—that's it, my boy, let's have a pipe!" And thus, uttering incoherent and broken sentences, he disappeared through the doorway with his long-lost and now recovered son.

Meanwhile Harry and Jacques continued to pace quietly before the house, waiting patiently until the first ebullition of feeling, at the meeting of Charley with his father and sister, should be over. In a few minutes Charley ran out.

"Hullo. Harry! come in, my boy; forgive my forgetfulness, but—"

"My dear fellow," interrupted Harry, "what nonsense you are talking! Of course you forgot me, and everybody and everything on earth, just now; but have you seen Kate? is—"

"Yes, yes," cried Charley, as he pushed his friend before him, and dragged Jacques after him into the parlour.—"Here's Harry, father, and Jacques.—You've heard of Jacques, Kate?"

"Harry, my dear boy!" cried Mr. Kennedy, seizing his young friend by the hand; "how are you, lad? Better, I hope."

At that moment Mr. Kennedy's eye fell on Jacques who stood in the doorway, cap in hand, with the usual quiet smile lighting up his countenance.

"What! Jacques—Jacques Caradoc!" he cried, in astonishment.

"The same, sir; you an' I have know'd each other afore now in the way o' trade," answered the hunter, as he grasped his old bourgeois by the hand and wrung it warmly.

Mr. Kennedy, senior, was so overwhelmed by the combination of exciting influences to which he was now subjected, that he plunged his hand into his pocket for the handkerchief again, and pulled out the fur hat instead, which he flung angrily at the cat; then using the sleeve of his coat as a substitute, he proceeded to put a series of abrupt questions to Jacques and Charley simultaneously.

In the meantime Harry went up to Kate and *stared* at her. We do not mean to say that he was intentionally rude to her. No! He went towards her intending to shake hands, and renew acquaintance with his old companion; but the moment he caught sight of her he was struck not only dumb but motionless. The odd part of it was that Kate, too, was affected in precisely the same way, and both of them exclaimed mentally, "Can it be possible?" Their lips, however, gave no utterance to the question. At length Kate recollected herself, and blushing deeply, held out her hand, as she said,—

"Forgive me, Har—Mr. Somerville; I was so surprised at your altered appearance I could scarcely believe that my old friend stood before me."

Harry's cheeks crimsoned as he seized her hand and said : " Indeed, Ka—a—Miss—that is, in fact, I've been very ill, and doubtless have changed somewhat ; but the very same thought struck me in regard to yourself, you are so—so—"

Fortunately for Harry, who was gradually becoming more and more confused, to the amusement of Charley, who had closely observed the meeting of his friend and sister, Mr. Kennedy came up.

" Eh ! what's that ? What did you say *struck* you, Harry, my lad ? "

" You did, father, on his arrival," replied Charley, with a broad grin, " and a very neat back-hander it was."

" Nonsense, Charley," interrupted Harry, with a laugh. " I was just saying, sir, that Miss Kennedy is so changed that I could hardly believe it to be herself."

" And I had just paid Mr. Somerville the same compliment, papa," cried Kate, laughing and blushing simultaneously.

Mr. Kennedy thrust his hands into his pockets, frowned portentously as he looked from the one to the other, and said slowly, "*Miss* Kennedy, *Mr.* Somerville !" then turning to his son, remarked, " That's something new, Charley lad ; that girl is *Miss* Kennedy, and that youth there is *Mr.* Somerville ! "

Charley laughed loudly at this sally, especially when the old gentleman followed it up with a series of contortions of the left cheek meant for violent winking.

" Right, father, right ; it won't do here. We don't know anybody but Kate and Harry in this house."

Harry laughed in his own genuine style at this.

" Well, Kate be it, with all my heart," said he ; " but, really, at first she seemed so unlike the Kate of former days that I could not bring myself to call her so."

" Humph ! " said Mr. Kennedy. " But come, boys, with me to my smoking-room, and let's have a talk over a pipe, while Kate looks after dinner." Giving Charley another squeeze of the hand, and Harry a pat on the shoulder, the old gentleman put on his cap (with the peak behind), and led the way to his glass divan in the garden.

It is perhaps unnecessary for us to say that Kate Kennedy and Harry Somerville had, within the last hour, fallen deeply, hopelessly, utterly, irrevocably, and totally in love with each other. They did not merely fall up to the ears in love. To say that they fell *over* head and ears in it would be, comparatively speaking, to say nothing. In fact, they did not *fall* into it at all. They went deliberately backwards, took a long race, sprang high into the air, turned completely round, and went down head first into the flood, descending to a depth utterly beyond the power of any deep-sea lead to fathom, or of any human mind adequately to appreciate. Up to that day Kate had thought of Harry as the hilarious youth who used to take every opportunity he could of escaping from the counting-room and hastening to spend the afternoon in rambling through the woods with her and Charley. But the instant she saw him a man, with a bright, cheerful countenance, on which rough living and exposure to frequent peril had stamped unmistakable lines of energy and decision, and to which recent illness had imparted a captivating touch of sadness—the moment she beheld this, and the undeniable scrap of whisker that graced his cheeks, and the slight *shade* that

rested on his upper lip, her heart leaped violently into her throat, where it stuck hard and fast, like a stranded ship on a lee-shore.

In like manner, when Harry beheld his former friend a woman, with beaming eyes and clustering ringlets, and—(there, we won't attempt it!)—in fact, surrounded by every nameless and namable grace that makes women exasperatingly delightful, his heart performed the same eccentric movement, and he felt that his fate was sealed; that he had been sucked into a rapid which was too strong even for his expert and powerful arm to contend against, and that he must drift with the current now, *nolens volens*, and run it as he best could.

When Kate retired to her sleeping-apartment that night, she endeavoured to comport herself in her usual manner; but all her efforts failed. She sat down on her bed, and remained motionless for half-an-hour; then she started and sighed deeply; then she smiled and opened her Bible, but forgot to read it; then she rose hastily, sighed again, took off her gown, hung it up on a peg, and returning to the dressing-table sat down on her best bonnet; then she cried a little, at which point the candle suddenly went out; so she gave a slight scream, and at last went to bed in the dark.

Three hours afterwards, Harry Somerville, who had been enjoying a cigar and a chat with Charley and his father, rose, and bidding his friends good-night, retired to his chamber, where he flung himself down on a chair, thrust his hands into his pockets, stretched out his legs, gazed abstractedly before him, and exclaimed—"O Kate, my exquisite girl, you've floored me quite flat!"

As he continued to sit in silence, the gaze of affection gradually and slowly changed into a look of intense astonishment as he beheld the gray cat sitting comfortably on the table, and regarding him with a look of complacent interest, as if it thought Harry's style of addressing it was highly satisfactory—though rather unusual.

"Brute!" exclaimed Harry, springing from his seat and darting towards it. But the cat was too well accustomed to old Mr. Kennedy's sudden onsets to be easily taken by surprise. With a bound it reached the floor, and took shelter under the bed, whence it was not ejected until Harry, having first thrown his shoes, soap, clothes-brush, and razor-strop at it, besides two or three books and several miscellaneous articles of toilet, at last opened the door (a thing, by the way, that people would do well always to remember before endeavouring to expel a cat from an impregnable position), and drew the bed into the middle of the room. Then, but not till then, it fled, with its back, its tail, its hair, its eyes—in short, its entire body—bristling in rampant indignation. Having dislodged the enemy, Harry replaced the bed, threw off his coat and waistcoat, untied his neck-cloth, sat down on his chair again, and fell into a reverie; from which, after half-an-hour, he started, clasped his hands, stamped his foot, glared up at the ceiling, slapped his thigh, and exclaimed, in the voice of a hero, "Yes, I'll do it, or die!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

The first day at home—A gallop in the prairie, and its consequences.

NEXT morning, as the quartette were at breakfast, Mr. Kennedy, senior, took occasion to propound to his son the plans he had laid down for them during the next week.

"In the first place, Charley, my boy," said he, as well as a large mouthful of buffalo steak and potato would permit, "you must drive up to the fort and report yourself. Harry and I will go with you ; and after we have paid our respects to old Grant (another cup of tea, Kate, my darling)—you recollect *him*, Charley, don't you ?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"Well, then, after we've been to see him, we'll drive down the river, and call on our friends at the mill. Then we'll look in on the Thomsons ; and give a call, in passing, on old Neverin—he's always out, so he'll be pleased to hear we were there, and it won't detain us. Then—"

"But, dear father—excuse my interrupting you—Harry and I are very anxious to spend our first day at home entirely with you and Kate. Don't you think it would be more pleasant ? and then to-morrow—"

"Now, Charley, this is too bad of you," said Mr. Kennedy, with a look of affected indignation : "no sooner have you come back than you're at your old tricks, opposing and thwarting your father's wishes."

"Indeed, I do not wish to do so, father," replied Charley, with a smile ; "but I thought that you would like my plan better yourself, and that it would afford us an opportunity of having a good long, satisfactory talk about all that concerns us, past, present, and future."

"What a daring mind you have, Charley," said Harry, "to speak of cramming a *satisfactory* talk of the past, the present, and the future all into *one* day !"

"Harry will take another cup of tea, Kate," said Charley, with an arch smile, as he went on,—

"Besides, father, Jacques tells me that he means to go off immediately, to visit a number of his old voyageur friends in the settlement, and I cannot part with him till we have had one more canter together over the prairies. I want to show him to Kate, for he's a great original."

"Oh, that will be charming !" cried Kate. "I should like of all things to be introduced to the bold hunter.—Another cup of tea, Mr. S—Harry, I mean ?"

Harry started on being thus unexpectedly addressed. "Yes, if you please—that is—thank you—no, my cup's full already, Kate !"

"Well, well," broke in Mr. Kennedy, senior, "I see you're all leagued against me, so I give in. But I shall not accompany you on your ride, as my bones are a little stiffer than they used to be" (the old gentleman sighed heavily), "and riding far knocks me up ; but I've got business to attend to in my glass house which will occupy me till dinner-time."

"If the business you speak of," began Charley, "is not incompatible with a cigar. I shall be happy to—"

"Why, as to that, the business itself has special reference to tobacco, and, in fact, to nothing else ; so come along, you young dog," and the old gentleman's cheek went into violent convulsions as he rose, put on his cap, with the peak very much over one eye, and went out in company with the young men.

An hour afterwards four horses stood saddled and bridled in front of the house. Three belonged to Mr. Kennedy ; the fourth had been borrowed from a neighbour as a mount for Jacques Caradoc. In a few minutes more Harry lifted Kate into the saddle, and having arranged her dress with a deal of unnecessary care, mounted his nag. At the same moment Charley and Jacques vaulted into their saddles, and the whole cavalcade galloped down the avenue that led to the prairie, followed by the admiring gaze of Mr. Kennedy, senior, who stood in the doorway of his mansion, his hands in his vest pockets, his head uncovered, and his happy visage smiling through a cloud of smoke that issued from his lips. He seemed the very personification of jovial good-humour, and what one might suppose Cupid would become were he permitted to grow old, dress recklessly, and take to smoking !

The prairies were bright that morning, and surpassingly beautiful. The grass looked greener than usual, the dew-drops more brilliant as they sparkled on leaf and blade and branch in the rays of an unclouded sun. The turf felt springy, and the horses, which were first-rate animals, seemed to dance over it, scarce crushing the wild-flowers beneath their hoofs, as they galloped lightly on, imbued with the same joyous feeling that filled the hearts of their riders. The plains at this place were more picturesque than in other parts, their uniformity being broken up by numerous clumps of small trees and wild shrubbery, intermingled with lakes and ponds of all sizes, which filled the hollows for miles around—temporary sheets of water these, formed by the melting snow, that told of winter now past and gone. Additional animation and life was given to the scene by flocks of water-fowl whose busy cry and cackle in the water, or whirling motion in the air, gave such an idea of joyousness in the brute creation as could not but strike a chord of sympathy in the heart of man, and create a feeling of gratitude to the Maker of man and beast. Although brilliant and warm, the sun, at least during the first part of their ride, was by no means oppressive ; so that the equestrians stretched out at full gallop for many miles over the prairie, round the lakes and through the bushes, ere their steeds showed the smallest symptoms of warmth.

During the ride Kate took the lead, with Jacques on her left and Harry on her right, while Charley brought up the rear, and conversed in a loud key with all three. At length Kate began to think it was just possible the horses might be growing wearied with the slapping pace, and checked her steed ; but this was not an easy matter, as the horse seemed to hold quite a contrary opinion, and showed a desire not only to continue but to increase its gallop—a propensity that induced Harry to lend his aid by grasping the rein and compelling the animal to walk.

"That's a spirited horse, Kate," said Charley, as they ambled along, "have you had him long?"

"No," replied Kate ; "our father purchased him just a week before your arrival, thinking that you would likely want a charger now and

then. I have only been on him once before.—Would he make a good buffalo-runner, Jacques?"

"Yes, miss; he would make an uncommon good runner," answered the hunter, as he regarded the animal with a critical glance—"at least if he don't shy at a gunshot."

"I never tried his nerves in that way," said Kate, with a smile; "perhaps he would shy at *that*. He has a good deal of spirit—oh, I do dislike a lazy horse, and I do delight in a spirited one!" Kate gave her horse a smart cut with the whip, half involuntarily, as she spoke. In a moment it reared almost perpendicularly, and then bounded forward; not, however, before Jacques's quick eye had observed the danger, and his ever-ready hand arrested its course.

"Have a care, Miss Kate," he said, in a warning voice, while he gazed in the face of the excited girl with a look of undisguised admiration. "It don't do to wallop a skittish beast like that."

"Never fear, Jacques," she replied, bending forward to pat her charger's arching neck; "see, he is becoming quite gentle again."

"If he runs away, Kate, we won't be able to catch you again, for he's the best of the four, I think," said Harry, with an uneasy glance at the animal's flashing eye and expanded nostrils.

"Ay, it's as well to keep the whip off him," said Jacques. "I know'd a young chap once in St. Louis who lost his sweetheart by usin' his whip too freely."

"Indeed," cried Kate, with a merry laugh, as they emerged from one of the numerous thickets and rode out upon the open plain at a foot pace; "how was that, Jacques? Pray tell us the story."

"As to that, there's little story about it," replied the hunter. "You see, Tim Roughhead took arter his name, an' was always doin' some mischief or other, which more than once nigh cost him his life; for the young trappers that frequent St. Louis are not fellows to stand too much jokin', I can tell ye. Well, Tim fell in love with a gal there who had jilted about a dozen lads afore; an' bein' an uncommon handsome, strappin' fellow, she encouraged him a good deal. But Tim had a suspicion that Louise was rayther sweet on a young store-keeper's clerk there: so, bein' an off-hand sort o' critter, he went right up to the gal, and says to her, says he, 'Come, Louise, it's o' no use humbuggin' with *me* any longer. If you like me, you like me; and if you don't like me, you don't. There's only two ways about it. Now jist say the word at once, an' let's have an end on't. If you agree, I'll squat with you in whativer bit o' the States you like to name; if not I'll bid you good-bye this blessed mornin', an' make tracks right away for the Rocky Mountains afore sundown. Ay or no, lass; which is it to be?"

"Poor Louise was taken all aback by this, but she knew well that Tim was a man who never threatened in jest, an' moreover she wasn't quite sure o' the young clerk; so she agreed, an' Tim went off to settle with her father about the weddin'. Well the day came, an' Tim, with a lot o' his comrades, mounted their horses, and rode off to the bride's house, which was a mile or two up the river out of the town. Just as they were startin', Tim's horse gave a plunge that well-nigh pitched him over its head, an' Tim came down on him with a cut o' his heavy whip that sounded like a pistol-shot. The beast was so mad at this that it gave a kind o' squeal an' another plunge that burst the girths. Tim brought the whip down on its flank again which made it shoot

forward like an arrow without a bow, leavin' poor Tim on the ground. So slick did it fly away that it didn't even throw him on his back, but let him fall sittin'-wise, saddle and all, plump on the spot where he sprang from. Tim scratched his head an' grinned like a half-worried rattlesnake as his comrades almost rolled off their saddles with laughin'. But it was no laughin' job, for poor Tim's legs was doubled under him, an' broken across at the thigh. It was long before he was able to go about again, and when he did recover he found that Louise and the young clerk were spliced an' away to Kentucky."

"So you see what are the probable consequences, Kate, if you use your whip so obstreperously again," cried Charley, pressing his horse into a canter.

Just at that moment a rabbit sprang from under a bush and darted away before them. In an instant Harry Somerville gave a wild shout, and set off in pursuit. Whether it was the cry or the sudden flight of Harry's horse, we cannot tell, but the next instant Kate's charger performed an indescribable flourish with its hind legs, laid back its ears, took the bit between its teeth, and ran away. Jacques was on its heels instantly, and a few seconds afterwards Charley and Harry joined in the pursuit, but their utmost efforts failed to do more than enable them to keep their ground. Kate's horse was making for a dense thicket, into which it became evident they must certainly plunge. Harry and her brother trembled when they looked at it and realised her danger; even Jacques's face showed some symptoms of perturbation for a moment as he glanced before him in indecision. The expression vanished, however, in a few seconds, and his cheerful, self-possessed look returned, as he cried out,—

"Pull the left rein hard, Miss Kate; try to edge up the slope."

Kate heard the advice, and exerting all her strength succeeded in turned her horse a little to the left, which caused him to ascend a gentle slope, at the top of which part of the thicket lay. She was closely followed by Harry and her brother, who urged their steeds madly forward in the hope of catching her reins, while Jacques diverged a little to the right. By this manœuvre the latter hoped to gain on the runaway, as the ground along which he rode was comparatively level, with a short but steep ascent at the end of it, while that along which Kate flew like the wind was a regular ascent, that would prove very trying to her horse. At the margin of the thicket grew a row of high bushes, towards which they now galloped with frightful speed. As Kate came up to this natural fence, she observed the trapper approaching on the other side of it. Springing from his jaded steed, without attempting to check its pace, he leaped over the underwood like a stag just as the young girl cleared the bushes at a bound. Grasping the reins, and checking the horse violently with one hand, he extended the other to Kate, who leapt unhesitatingly into his arms. At the same instant Charley cleared the bushes, and pulled sharply up; while Harry's horse, unable, owing to its speed, to take the leap, came crashing through them, and dashed his rider with stunning violence to the ground.

Fortunately, no bones were broken, and a draught of clear water, brought by Jacques from a neighbouring pond, speedily restored Harry's shaken faculties.

"Now, Kate," said Charley, leading forward the horse which he had

been riding, "I have changed saddles, as you see; this horse will suit you better, and I'll take the shine out of your charger on the way home."

"Thank you, Charley," said Kate with a smile. "I've quite recovered from my fright—if indeed, it is worth calling by that name; but I fear that Harry has—"

"Oh, I'm all right," cried Harry, advancing as he spoke to assist Kate in mounting. "I am ashamed to think that my wild cry was the cause of all this."

In another minute they were again in their saddles, and turning their faces homeward, they swept over the plain at a steady gallop, fearing lest their accident should be the means of making Mr. Kennedy wait dinner for them. On arriving, they found the old gentleman engaged in an animated discussion with the cook about laying the table-cloth, which duty he had imposed on himself in Kate's absence.

"Ah, Kate, my love," he cried, as they entered, "come here, lass, and mount guard. I've almost broke my heart in trying to convince that thick-headed goose that he can't set the table properly. Take it off my hands, like a good girl.—Charley, my boy, you'll be pleased to hear that your old friend Redfeather is here."

"Redfeather, father!" exclaimed Charley, in surprise.

"Yes; he and the parson, from the other end of Lake Winnipeg, arrived an hour ago in a tin kettle, and are now on their way to the upper fort."

"That is, indeed, pleasant news; but I suspect that it will give much greater pleasure to our friend Jacques, who I believe, would be glad to lay down his life for him, simply to prove his affection."

"Well, well," said the old gentleman, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, and refilling it so as to be ready for an after-dinner smoke, "Redfeather has come, and the parson's come too; and I look upon it as quite miraculous that they *have* come, considering the *thing* they came in. What they've come for is more than I can tell, but I suppose it's connected with church affairs.—Now then, Kate, what's come o' the dinner, Kate? Stir up that grampus of a cook! I half expect that he has boiled the cat for dinner, in his wrath, for it has been badgering him and me the whole morning.—Hollo, Harry, what's wrong?"

The last exclamation was in consequence of an expression of pain which crossed Harry's face for a moment.

"Nothing, nothing," replied Harry. "I've had a fall from my horse, and bruised my arm a little. But I'll see to it after dinner."

"That you shall not," cried Mr. Kennedy energetically, dragging his young friend into his bedroom. Off with your coat, lad. Let's see it at once. Ay, ay," he continued, examining Harry's left arm, which was very much discoloured and swelled from the elbow to the shoulder, "that's a severe thump, my boy. But it's nothing to speak of; only you'll have to submit to a sling for a day or two."

"That's annoying, certainly, but I'm thankful it's no worse," remarked Harry, as Mr. Kennedy dressed the arm after his own fashion, and then returned with him to the dining-room.

CHAPTER XXX.

Love—Old Mr. Kennedy puts his foot in it

ONE morning, about two weeks after Charley's arrival at Red River, Harry Somerville found himself alone in Mr. Kennedy's parlour. The old gentleman himself had just galloped away in the direction of the lower fort, to visit Charley, who was now formally installed there; Kate was busy in the kitchen giving directions about dinner; and Jacques was away with Redfeather, visiting his numerous friends in the settlement: so that, for the first time since his arrival, Harry found himself at the hour of ten in the morning utterly lone, and with nothing very definite to do. Of course, the two weeks that had elapsed were not without their signs and symptoms, their minor accidents and incidents, in regard to the subject that filled his thoughts. Harry had fifty times been tossed alternately from the height of hope to the depth of despair, from the extreme of felicity to the uttermost verge of sorrow, and he began seriously to reflect, when he remembered his desperate resolution on the first night of his arrival, that if he did not "do" he certainly would "die." This was quite a mistake, however, on Harry's part. Nobody ever did *die* of unrequited love. Doubtless many people have hanged, drowned, and shot themselves because of it; but, generally speaking, if the patient can be kept from maltreating himself long enough, *time* will prove to be an infallible remedy. O youthful reader, lay this to heart; but, pshaw! why do I waste ink on so hopeless a task? *Every* one, we suppose, resolves once in a way to *die* of love; so—die away, my young friends, only make sure that you don't *kill* yourselves, and I've no fear of the result.

But to return. Kate, likewise, was similarly affected. She behaved like a perfect maniac—mentally, that is—and plunged herself, metaphorically, into such a succession of hot and cold baths, that it was quite a marvel how her spiritual constitution could stand it.

But we were wrong in saying that Harry was *alone* in the parlour. The gray cat was there. On a chair before the fire it sat, looking dishevelled and somewhat *blasé*, in consequence of the ill-treatment and worry to which it was continually subjected. After a look out of the window for a short time, Harry rose, and sitting down on a chair beside the cat, patting its head—a mark of attention it was evidently not averse to, but which it received, nevertheless, with marked suspicion, and some indication of being in a condition of armed neutrality. Just then the door opened, and Kate entered.

"Excuse me, Harry, for leaving you alone," she said, "but I had to go to attend to several household matters. Do you feel inclined for a walk?"

"I do indeed," replied Harry; "it is a charming day, and I am exceedingly anxious to see the bower that you have spoken to me about once or twice, and which Charley told me of long before I came here."

"Oh, I shall take you to it with pleasure," replied Kate; "my dear father often goes there with me to smoke. If you will wait for two minutes I'll put on my bonnet," and she hastened to prepare herself for the walk, leaving Harry to caress the cat, which he did so energetically, when he thought of its young mistress, that it

instantly declared war, and sprang from the chair with a remonstrative yell.

On their way down to the bower, which was situated in a picturesque, retired spot on the river's bank about a mile below the house, Harry and Kate tried to converse on ordinary topics, but without success, and were at last almost reduced to silence. One subject alone filled their minds; all others were flat. Being sunk, as it were, in an ocean of love, they no sooner opened their lips to speak than the waters rushed in, as a natural consequence, and nearly choked them. Had they but opened their mouths wide and boldly, they would have been pleasantly drowned together; but as it was, they lacked the requisite courage, and were fain to content themselves with an occasional frantic struggle to the surface, where they gasped a few words of uninteresting air, and sank again instantly.

On arriving at the bower, however, and sitting down, Harry plucked up heart, and, heaving a deep sigh, said:—

"Kate, there is a subject about which I have long desired to speak to you—"

Long as he had been desiring it, however, Kate thought it must have been nothing compared with the time that elapsed ere he said anything else; so she bent over a flower which she held in her hand, and said in a low voice, "Indeed, Harry; what is it?"

Harry was desperate now. His usually flexible tongue was stiff as stone and dry as a bit of leather. He could no more give utterance to an intelligible idea than he could change himself into Mr. Kennedy's gray cat—a change that he would not have been unwilling to make at that moment. At last he seized his companion's hand, and exclaimed, with a burst of emotion that quite startled her,—

"Kate, Kate! O dearest Kate, I love you! I *adore* you! I—"

At this point poor Harry's powers of speech again failed; so being utterly unable to express another idea, he suddenly threw his arms round her, and pressed her fervently to his bosom.

Kate was taken quite aback by this summary method of coming to the point. Repulsing him energetically, she exclaimed, while she blushed crimson, "O Harry—Mr Somerville!" and burst into tears.

Poor Harry stood before her for a moment, his head hanging down, and a deep blush of shame on his face.

"O Kate," said he, in a deep, tremulous voice, "forgive me; do—do forgive me! I knew not what I said. I scarce knew what I did" (here he seized her hand). "I know but one thing, Kate, and tell it you I *will*, if it should cost me my life. I love you, Kate, to distraction, and I wish you to be my wife. I have been rude, very rude. Can you forgive me, Kate?"

Now, this latter part of Harry's speech was particularly comical, the comicality of it lying in this, that while he spoke he drew Kate gradually towards him, and at the very time when he gave utterance to the penitential remorse for his rudeness, Kate was enfolded in a much more vigorous embrace than at the first; and what is more remarkable still, she laid her little head quietly on his shoulder, as if she had quite changed her mind in regard to what was and what was not rude, and rather enjoyed it than otherwise.

While the lovers stood in this interesting position, it became

apparent to Harry's olfactory nerves that the atmosphere was impregnated with tobacco smoke. Looking hastily up, he beheld an apparition that tended somewhat to increase the confusion of his faculties.

In the opening of the bower stood Mr. Kennedy, senior, in a state of inexpressible amazement. We say *inexpressible* advisedly, because the extreme pitch of feeling which Mr. Kennedy experienced at what he beheld before him cannot possibly be expressed by human visage. As far as the countenance of man could do it, however, we believe the old gentleman's came pretty near the mark on this occasion. His hands were in his coat pockets, his body bent a little forward, his head and neck outstretched a little beyond it, his eyes almost starting from the sockets, and certainly the most prominent feature in his face; his teeth firmly clinched on his beloved pipe, and his lips expelling a multitude of little clouds so vigorously that one might have taken him for a sort of self-acting intelligent steam-gun that had resolved utterly to annihilate Kate and Harry at short range in the course of two minutes.

When Kate saw her father she uttered a slight scream, covered her face with her hands, rushed from the bower, and disappeared in the wood.

"So, young gentleman," began Mr. Kennedy, in a slow, deliberate tone of voice, while he removed the pipe from his month, clinched his fists, and confronted Harry, "you've been invited to my house as a guest, sir, and you seize the opportunity basely to insult my daughter!"

"Stay, stay, my dear sir," interrupted Harry, laying his hand on the old man's shoulder and gazing earnestly into his face. "Oh, do not, even for a moment, imagine that I could be so base as to trifle with the affections of your daughter. I may have been presumptuous, hasty, foolish, mad if you will, but not base. God forbid that I should treat her with disrespect, even in thought! I love her, Mr. Kennedy, as I never loved before. I have asked her to be my wife, and—she—"

"Whew!" whistled old Mr. Kennedy, replacing his pipe between his teeth, gazing abstractedly at the ground, and emitting clouds innumerable. After standing thus a few seconds, he turned his back slowly upon Harry, and smiled outrageously once or twice, winking at the same time, after his own fashion, at the river. Turning abruptly round, he regarded Harry with a look of affected dignity, and said, "Pray, sir, what did my daughter say to your very peculiar proposal?"

"She said ye—ah! that is—she didn't exactly *say* anything, but she—indeed I—"

"Humph!" ejaculated the old gentleman, deepening his frown as he regarded his young friend through the smoke. "In short she said nothing, I suppose, but led you to infer, perhaps, that she would have said yes if I hadn't interrupted you."

Harry blushed, and said nothing.

"Now, sir," continued Mr. Kennedy, "don't you think that it would have been a polite piece of attention on your part to have asked *my* permission before you addressed my daughter on such a subject, eh?"

"Indeed," said Harry, "I acknowledge that I have been hasty, but I must disclaim the charge of disrespect to you, sir. I had no intention

whatever of broaching the subject to-day, but my feelings, unhappily, carried me away, and—and—in fact—”

“Well, well, sir,” interrupted Mr. Kennedy, with a look of offended dignity, “your feelings ought to be kept more under control. But come, sir, to my house. I must talk further with you on this subject. I must read you a lesson, sir—a lesson, humph! that you won’t forget in a hurry.”

“But, my dear sir—” began Harry.

“No more, sir—no more at present,” cried the old gentleman, smoking violently as he pointed to the footpath that led to the house. “Lead the way, sir; I’ll follow.”

The footpath, although wide enough to allow Kate and Harry to walk beside each other, did not permit the two gentlemen doing so conveniently—a circumstance which proved a great relief to Mr. Kennedy, inasmuch as it enabled him, while walking behind his companion, to wink convulsively, smoke furiously, and punch his own ribs severely, by way of opening a few safety-valves to his glee, without which there is no saying what might have happened. He was nearly caught in these eccentricities more than once, however, as Harry turned half round with the intention of again attempting to exculpate himself—attempts which were as often met by a sudden start, a fierce frown, a burst of smoke, and a command to “go on.” On approaching the house, the track became a broad road, affording Mr. Kennedy no excuse for walking in the rear, so that he was under the necessity of laying violent restraint on his feelings—restraint which it was evident could not last long. At that moment, to his great relief, his eye suddenly fell on the gray cat, which happened to be reposing innocently on the doorstep.

“*That’s* it! there’s the whole cause of it at last!” cried Mr. Kennedy, in a perfect paroxysm of excitement, flinging his pipe violently at the unoffending victim as he rushed towards it. The pipe missed the cat, but went with a sharp crash through the parlour window, at which Charley was seated, while his father darted through the doorway, along the passage, and into the kitchen. Here the cat, having first capsized a pyramid of pans and kettles in its consternation, took refuge in an absolute unassailable position. Seeing this, Mr. Kennedy violently discharged a pailful of water at the spot, strode rapidly to his own apartment, and locked himself in.

“Dear me, Harry, what’s wrong? my father seems unusually excited,” said Charley, in some astonishment, as Harry entered the room and flung himself on to a chair with a look of chagrin.

“It’s difficult to say, Charley; the fact is, I’ve asked your sister Kate to be my wife, and your father seems to have gone mad with indignation.”

“Asked Kate to be your wife!” cried Charley, starting up and regarding his friend with a look of amazement.

“Yes, I have,” replied Harry, with an air of offended dignity. “I know very well that I am unworthy of her, but I see no reason why you and your father should take such pains to make me feel it.”

“Unworthy of her, my dear fellow!” exclaimed Charley, grasping his hand and wringing it violently; “no doubt you are, and so is everybody, but you shall have her for all that, my boy. But tell me, Harry, have you spoken to Kate herself?”

“Yes, I have.”

"And does she agree?"

"Well, I think I may say she does."

"Have you told my father that she does?"

"Why, as to that," said Harry, with a perplexed smile, "he didn't need to be told; he made *himself* pretty well aware of the facts of the case."

"Ah! I'll soon settle *him*," cried Charley. "Keep your mind easy, old fellow; I'll very soon bring him round." With this assurance, Charley gave his friend's hand another shake that nearly wrenched the arm from his shoulder, and hastened out of the room in search of his refractory father.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The course of true love, curiously enough, runs smooth for once; and the curtain falls.

TIME rolled on, and with it the sunbeams of summer went—the snow-flakes of winter came. Needles of ice began to shoot across the surface of Red River, and gradually narrowed its bed. Crystalline trees formed upon the window-panes. Icicles depended from the eaves of the houses. Snow fell in abundance on the plains; liquid nature began rapidly to solidify, and not many weeks after the first frost made its appearance everything was (as the settlers expressed it) "hard and fast."

Mr. Kennedy, senior, was in his parlour, with his back to a blazing wood fire that seemed large enough to roast an ox whole. He was standing, moreover, in a semi-picturesque attitude, with his right hand in his breeches pocket and his left arm round Kate's waist. Kate was dressed in a gown that rivalled the snow itself in whiteness. One little gold clasp shone in her bosom; it was the only ornament she wore. Mr. Kennedy, too, had somewhat altered his style of costume. He wore a sky-blue swallow-tailed coat, whose maker had flourished in London half-a-century before. It had a velvet collar about five inches deep, fitted uncommonly tight to the figure, and had a pair of bright brass buttons, very close together, situated half-a-foot above the wearer's natural waist. Besides this, he had on a canary-coloured vest, and a pair of white duck trousers, in the fob of which *evidently* reposed an immense gold watch of the olden time, with a bunch of seals that would have served very well as an anchor for a small boat. Although the dress was, on the whole, slightly comical, its owner, with his full, fat, broad figure, looked remarkably well in it, nevertheless.

It was Kate's marriage-day, or rather marriage-evening; for the sun had set two hours ago, and the moon was now sailing in the frosty sky, its pale rays causing the whole country to shine with a clear, cold, silvery whiteness.

The old gentleman had been for some time gazing in silent admiration on the fair brow and clustering ringlets of his daughter, when it suddenly occurred to him that the company would arrive in half-an-hour, and there were several things still to be attended to.

"Hollo, Kate!" he exclaimed, with a start, we're forgetting ourselves. The candles are yet to light, and lots of other things to do." Saying this, he began to bustle about the room in a state of considerable agitation.

"Oh, don't worry yourself, dear father!" cried Kate, running after him and catching him by the hand. "Miss Cookumwell and good Mrs. Taddipople are arranging everything about tea and supper in the kitchen, and Tom Whyte has been kindly sent to us by Mr. Grant, with orders to make himself generally useful, so *he* can light the candles in a few minutes, and you've nothing to do but to kiss me and receive the company." Kate pulled her father gently towards the fire again, and replaced his arm round her waist.

"Receive company! Ah, Kate, my love, that's just what I know nothing about. If they'd let me receive them in my own way, I'd do it well enough; but that abominable Mrs. Taddi—what's her name—has quite addled my brains and driven me distracted with trying to get me to understand what she calls *etiquette*."

Kate laughed, and said she didn't care *how* he received them, as she was quite sure that, whichever way he did it, he would do it pleasantly and well.

At that moment the door opened, and Tom Whyte entered. He was thinner if possible, than he used to be, and considerably stiffer, and more upright.

"Please, sir," said he, with a motion that made you expect to hear his back creak (it was intended for a bow)—"please, sir, can I do hanythink for yer?"

"Yes, Tom, you can," replied Mr. Kennedy. "Light these candles, my man, and then go to the stable and see that everything there is arranged for putting up the horses. It will be pretty full to-night, Tom, and will require some management. Then, let me see—ah yes, bring me my pipe, Tom, my big meerschaum.—I'll sport that to-night in honour of you, Kate."

"Please, sir," began Tom, with a slightly disconcerted air, "I'm afeared, sir, that—um—"

"Well, Tom, what would you say? Go on."

"The pipe, sir," said Tom, growing still more disconcerted—"says I to cook, says I, 'Cook, wot's been an' done it, d'ye think?' 'Dun know, Tom,' says he, 'but it's smashed, that's sartin. I think the gray cat—'"

"What!" cried the old trader, in a voice of thunder, while a frown of the most portentous ferocity darkened his brow for an instant. It was only for an instant, however. Clearing his brow quickly, he said with a smile, "But it's your wedding-day, Kate, my darling. It won't do to blow up anybody to-day, not even the cat.—There, be off, Tom, and see to things. Look sharp! I hear sleigh-bells already."

As he spoke Tom vanished perpendicularly, Kate hastened to her room, and the old gentleman himself went to the front door to receive his guests.

The night was of that intensely calm and still character that invariably accompanies intense frost, so that the merry jingle of the sleigh-bells that struck on Mr. Kennedy's listening ear continued to sound, and grow louder as they drew near, for a considerable time ere the visitors arrived. Presently the dull, soft tramp of horses' hoofs was heard in the snow, and a well-known voice shouted out lustily, "Now then, Mactavish, keep to the left. Doesn't the road take a turn there? Mind the gap in the fence. That's old Kennedy's only fault. He'd rather risk breaking his friends' necks than mend his fences!"

"All right, here we are," cried Mactavish, as the next instant two sleighs emerged out of the avenue into the moonlit space in front of the house, and dashed up to the door amid an immense noise and clatter of bells, harness, hoofs, snorting, and salutations.

"Ah, Grant, my dear fellow!" cried Mr. Kennedy, springing to the sleigh and seizing his friend by the hand as he dragged him out. "This is kind of you to come early. And Mrs. Grant, too. Take care, my dear madam, step clear of the haps; now, then—cleverly done" (as Mrs. Grant tumbled into his arms in a confused heap). "Come along now; there's a capital fire in here.—Don't mind the horses, Mactavish—follow us, my lad; Tom Whyte will attend to them."

Uttering such disjointed remarks, Mr. Kennedy led Mrs. Grant into the house, and made her over to Mrs. Taddipopple, who hurried her away to an inner apartment, while Mr. Kennedy conducted her spouse, along with Mactavish and our friend the head clerk at Fort Garry, into the parlour.

"Harry, my dear fellow, I wish you joy," cried Mr. Grant, as the former grasped his hand. "Lucky dog you are. Where's Kate, eh? Not visible yet, I suppose."

"No, not till the parson comes," interrupted Mr. Kennedy, convulsing his left cheek.—"Hollo, Charley, where are you? Ah! bring the cigars, Charley.—Sit down, gentlemen; make yourselves at home.—I say, Mrs. Taddi—Taddi—oh, botheration—popple! that's it—your name madam is a puzzler—but—we'll need more chairs, I think. Fetch one or two, like a dear!"

As he spoke the jingle of bells was heard outside, and Mr. Kennedy rushed to the door again.

"Good-evening, Mr. Addison," said he, taking that gentleman warmly by the hand as he resigned the reins to Tom Whyte. "I am delighted to see you, sir (Look after the minister's mare, Tom), glad to see you, my dear sir. Some of my friends have come already. This way, Mr. Addison."

The worthy clergyman responded to Mr. Kennedy's greeting in his own hearty manner, and followed him into the parlour, where the guests now began to assemble rapidly.

"Father," cried Charley, catching his sire by the arm, "I've been looking for you everywhere but you dance about like a will-o'-the-wisp. Do you know I've invited my friends Jacques and Redfeather to come to-night, and also Louis Peltier, the guide with whom I made my first trip. You recollect him, father?"

"Ay, that do I, lad, and happy shall I be to see three such worthy men under my roof as guests on this night."

"Yes, yes, I know that, father; but I don't see them here. Have they come yet?"

"Can't say, boy. By the way, Pastor Conway is also coming, so we'll have a meeting between an Episcopalian and a Wesleyan. I sincerely trust that they won't fight!" As he said this the old gentleman grinned and threw his cheek into convulsions—an expression which was suddenly changed into one of confusion when he observed that Mr. Addison was standing close beside him, and had heard the remark.

"Don't blush, my dear sir," said Mr. Addison, with a quiet smile, as he patted his friend on the shoulder. "You have too much reason

I am sorry to say, for expecting that clergymen of different denominations should look coldly on each other. There is far too much of this indifference and distrust among those who labour in different parts of the Lord's vineyard. But I trust you will find that my sympathies extend a little beyond the circle of my own particular body. Indeed Mr. Conway is a particular friend of mine ; so I assure you we won't fight."

"Right, right," cried Mr. Kennedy, giving the clergyman an energetic grasp of the hand ; "I like to hear you speak that way. I must confess that I have been a good deal surprised to observe, by what one reads in the old-country newspapers, as well as by what one sees even hereaway in the backwood settlements, how little interest clergymen show in the doings of those who don't happen to belong to their own particular sect ; just as if a soul saved through the means of an Episcopalian was not of as much value as one saved by a Wesleyan, or a Presbyterian, or a Dissenter. Why, sir, it seems to me just as mean-spirited and selfish as if one of our chief factors was so entirely taken up with the doings and success of his own particular district that he didn't care a gun-flint for any other district in the Company's service."

There was at least one man listening to these remarks whose naturally logical and liberal mind fully agreed with them. This was Jacques Caradoc, who had entered the room a few minutes before, in company with his friend Redfeather and Louis Peltier.

"Right, sir ! That's fact, straight up and down," said he, in an approving tone.

"Ha ! Jacques, my good fellow, is that you ?—Redfeather, my friend how are you ?" said Mr. Kennedy, turning round and grasping a hand of each.—"Sit down there, Louis, beside Mrs. Taddi—eh ?—ah !—popple.—Mr. Addison, this is Jacques Caradoc, the best and stoutest hunter between Hudson's Bay and Oregon."

Jacques smiled and bowed modestly as Mr. Addison, shook his hand. The worthy hunter did indeed at that moment look as if he fully merited Mr. Kennedy's eulogium. Instead of endeavouring to ape the gentleman, as many men in his rank of life would have been likely to do on an occasion like this, Jacques had not altered his costume a hair-breadth from what it usually was, excepting that some parts of it were quite new, and all of it faultlessly clean. He wore the usual capote, but it was his best one, and had been washed for the occasion. The scarlet belt and blue leggings were also as bright in colour as if they had been put on for the first time ; and the moccasins which fitted closely to his well-formed feet, were of the cleanest and brightest yellow leather, ornamented, as usual, in front. The collar of his blue-striped shirt was folded back a little more carefully than usual, exposing his sun-burned and muscular throat. In fact, he wanted nothing, save the hunting-knife, the rifle, and the powder-horn to constitute him a perfect specimen of a thorough backwoodsman.

Redfeather and Louis were similarly costumed, and a noble trio they looked as they sat modestly in a corner, talking to each other in whispers, and endeavouring, as much as possible, to curtail their colossal proportions.

"Now, Harry," said Mr. Kennedy, in a hoarse whisper, at the same time winking vehemently, "we're about ready, lad. Where's Kate, eh ? shall we send for her ?"

Harry blushed, and stammered out something that was wholly unintelligible, but which, nevertheless, seemed to afford infinite delight to the old gentleman, who chuckled, and winked tremendously, gave his son-in-law a facetious poke in the ribs, and turning abruptly to Miss Cookumwell, said to that lady, "Now, Miss Cookumpopple, we're all ready. They seem to have had enough tea and trash ; you'd better be looking after Kate, I think."

Miss Cookumwell smiled, rose, and left the room to obey ; Mrs. Taddipopple followed to help, and soon returned with Kate, whom they delivered up to her father at the door. Mr. Kennedy led her to the upper end of the room ; Harry Somerville stood by her side as if by magic ; Mr. Addison dropped opportunely before them, as if from the clouds ; there was an extraordinary and abrupt pause in the hum of conversation, and ere Kate was well aware of what was about to happen, she felt herself suddenly embraced by her husband, from whom she was thereafter violently torn and all but smothered by her sympathizing friends.

Poor Kate ! she had gone through the ceremony almost mechanically—*recklessly*, we might be justified in saying ; for not having raised her eyes off the floor from its commencement to its close, the man whom she accepted for better or for worse might have been Jacques or Redfeather for all that she knew.

Immediately after this there was heard the sound of a fiddle, and an old Canadian was led to the upper end of the room, placed on a chair and hoisted, by the powerful arms of Jacques and Louis upon the table. In this conspicuous position the old man seemed to be quite at his ease. He spent a few minutes in bringing his instrument into perfect tune ; then looking round with a mild patronizing glance to see that the dancers were ready, he suddenly struck up a Scotch reel with an amount of energy, precision, and spirit that might have shot a pang of jealousy through the heart of Neil Gow himself. The noise that instantly commenced and was kept up from that moment, with but few intervals during the whole evening, was of a kind that is never heard in fashionable drawing-rooms. Dancing in the backwood settlements is dancing. It is not walking ; it is not sailing ; it is not undulating ; it is not sliding ; no, it is *bona-fide* dancing ! It is the performance of intricate evolutions with the feet and legs that makes one wink to look at ; performed in good time too, and by people who look upon *all* their muscles as being useful machines, not merely things of which a select few, that cannot be dispensed with, are brought into daily operation. Consequently the thing was done with an amount of vigour that was conducive to the health of performers, and productive of satisfaction to the eyes of beholders. When the evening wore on apace however, and Jacques' modesty was so far overcome as to induce him to engage in a reel, along with his friend Louis Peltier, and two bouncing young ladies whose father had driven them twenty miles over the plains that day in order to attend the wedding of their dear friend and former playmate, Kate—when these four stood up, we say, and the fiddler played more energetically than ever, and the stout backwoodsmen began to warm and grow vigorous, until, in the midst of their tremendous leaps and rapid but well timed motions, they looked like very giants amid their brethren, then it was that Harry, as he felt Kate's little hand pressing his arm, and observed her sparkling eyes gazing at the dancers in genuine admiration, began at

last firmly to believe that the whole thing was a dream ; and then it was that old Mr. Kennedy rejoiced to think that the house had been built under his own special directions, and he knew that it could not by any possibility be shaken to pieces.

And well might Harry imagine that he dreamed ; for besides the bewildering tendency of the almost too-good-to-be-true fact that Kate was really Mrs. Harry Somerville, the scene before him was a particularly odd and perplexing mixture of widely different elements suggestive of new and old associations. The company was miscellaneous. There were retired old traders, whose lives from boyhood had been spent in danger, solitude, wild scenes and adventures, to which those of Robinson Crusoe are mere child's play. There were young girls, the daughters of these men, who had received good educations in the Red River academy, and a certain degree of polish which education always gives ; a very *different* polish, indeed, from that which the conventionalities and refinements of the Old World bestow, but not the less agreeable on that account—nay, we might even venture to say, all the *more* agreeable on that account. There were Red Indians and clergymen ; there were one or two ladies of a doubtful age, who had come out from the old country to live there, having found it no easy matter, poor things, to live at home ; there were matrons whose absolute silence on every subject save “yes” or “no” showed that they had not been subjected to the refining influences of the academy, but whose hearty smiles and laughs of genuine good-nature proved that the storing of the brain has, after all, *very* little to do with the best and deepest feelings of the heart. There were the tones of Scotch reels sounding—tones that brought Scotland vividly before the very eyes ; and there were Canadian hunters and half-breed voyageurs, whose moccasins were more accustomed to the turf of the woods than the boards of a drawing-room, and whose speech and accents made Scotland vanish away altogether from the memory. There were old people and young folk ; there were fat and lean, short and long. There were songs too—ballads of England, pathetic songs of Scotland, alternating with the French ditties of Canada, and the sweet, inexpressibly plaintive canoe-songs of the voyageur. There were strong contrasts in dress also : some wore the home-spun trousers of the settlement, a few the ornamented leggings of the hunter. Capotes were there—loose, flowing, and picturesque ; and broad-cloth tail-coats were there, of the last century, tight-fitting angular—in a word, detestable ; verifying the truth of the proverb that extremes meet, by showing that the *cut* which all the wisdom of tailors and scientific fops, after centuries of study, had laboriously wrought out and foisted upon the poor civilized world as perfectly sublime, appeared in the eyes of backwoodsmen and Indians utterly ridiculous. No wonder that Harry, under the circumstances, became quietly insane, and went about committing *nothing* but mistakes the whole evening. No wonder that he emulated his father-in-law in abusing the gray cat, when he found it surreptitiously devouring part of the supper in an adjoining room ; and no wonder that, when he rushed about vainly in search of Mrs. Taddipopple, to acquaint her with the cat's wickedness, he at last, in desperation, laid violent hands on Miss Cookumwell, and addressed that excellent lady by the name of Mrs. Poppletaddy.

Were we courageous enough to make the attempt, we would

endeavour to describe that joyful evening from beginning to end. We would tell you how the company's spirits rose higher and higher, as each individual became more and more anxious to lend his or her aid in adding to the general hilarity ; how old Mr. Kennedy nearly killed himself in his fruitless efforts to be everywhere, speak to everybody, and do everything at once ; how Charley danced till he could scarcely speak, and then talked till he could hardly dance ; and how the fiddler, instead of growing wearied, became gradually and continuously more powerful, until it seemed as if fifty fiddles were playing at one and the same time. We would tell you how Mr. Addison drew more than ever to Mr. Conway, and how the latter gentleman agreed to correspond regularly with the former thenceforth, in order that their interest in the great work each had in hand for the *same* Master might be increased and kept up ; how in a spirit of recklessness (afterwards deeply repented of), a bashful young man was induced to sing a song which in the present mirthful state of the company ought to have been a humorous song, or a patriotic song, or a good loud, inspiriting song, or *anything*, in short, but what it was—a slow, dull, sentimental song, about wasting gradually away in a sort of melancholy decay, on account of disappointed love, or some such trash, which was a false sentiment in itself, and certainly did not derive any additional tinge of truthfulness from a thin, weak voice, that was afflicted with chronic flatness, and *edged* all its notes. Were we courageous enough to go on, we would further relate to you how during supper Mr. Kennedy, senior, tried to make a speech, and broke down amid uproarious applause ; how Mr. Kennedy, junior, got up thereafter—being urged thereto by his father, who said, with a convulsion of the cheek, “Get me out of the scrape, Charley, my boy” —and delivered an oration which did not display much power of concise elucidation, but was replete, nevertheless, with consummate impudence ; how during this point in the proceedings the gray cat made a last desperate effort to purloin a cold chicken, which it had watched anxiously the whole evening, and was caught in the very act, nearly strangled, and flung out of the window, where it alighted in safety on the snow, and fled, a wiser, and, we trust, a better cat. We would recount all this to you, reader, and a great deal more besides ; but we fear to try your patience, and we tremble violently, much more so, indeed, than you will believe, at the bare idea of waxing prosy.

Suffice it to say that the party separated at an early hour—a good, sober, reasonable hour for such an occasion—somewhere before midnight. The horses were harnessed ; the ladies were packed in the sleighs with furs so thick and plentiful as to defy the cold ; the gentlemen seized their reins and cracked their whips ; the horses snorted, plunged, and dashed away over the white plains in different directions, while the merry sleigh-bells sounded fainter and fainter in the frosty air. In half-an-hour the stars twinkled down on the still, cold scene, and threw a pale light on the now silent dwelling of the old fur-trader.

Ere dropping the curtain over a picture in which we have sought faithfully to portray the prominent features of those wild regions that lie to the north of the Canadas, and in which we have endeavoured to describe some of the peculiarities of a class of men

whose histories seldom meet the public eye, we feel tempted to add a few more touches to the sketch; we would fain trace a little farther the fortunes of one or two of the chief actors in our book. But this must not be.

Snowflakes and sunbeams came and went as in days gone by. Time rolled on, working many changes in its course, and among others consigning Harry Somerville to an important post in Red River colony, to the unutterable joy of Mr. Kennedy, senior, and of Kate. After much consideration and frequent consultation with Mr. Addison, Mr. Conway resolved to make another journey to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to those Indian tribes that inhabit the regions beyond Athabasca; and being a man of great energy, he determined not to await the opening of the river navigation, but to undertake the first part of his expedition on snow-shoes. Jacques agreed to go with him as guide and hunter, Redfeather as interpreter. It was a bright, cold morning when he set out, accompanied part of the way by Charley Kennedy and Harry Somerville, whose hearts were heavy at the prospect of parting with the two men who had guided and protected them during their earliest experience of a voyageur's life, when, with hearts full to overflowing with romantic anticipations, they first dashed joyously into the almost untrodden wilderness.

During their career in the woods together, the young men and the two hunters had become warmly attached to each other; and now that they were about to part—it might be for years, perhaps for ever—a feeling of sadness crept over them which they could not shake off, and which the promise given by Mr. Conway to revisit Red River on the following spring served but slightly to dispel.

On arriving at the spot where they intended to bid their friends a last farewell, the two young men held out their hands in silence. Jacques grasped them warmly.

"Mister Charles, Mister Harry," said he, in a deep, earnest voice, "the Almighty has guided us in safety for many a day when we travelled the woods together; for which praised be His holy name! May He guide and bless you still, and bring us together in this world again, if in His wisdom He see fit."

There was no answer save a deeply murmured "Amen." In another moment the travellers resumed their march. On reaching the summit of a slight eminence, where the prairies terminated and the woods began, they paused to wave a last adieu; then Jacques, putting himself at the head of the little party, plunged into the forest, and led them away towards the snowy regions of the Far North.

THE CORAL ISLAND.

CHAPTER I.

The beginning—My early life and character—I thirst for adventure in foreign lands, and go to sea.

ROVING has always been, and still is, my ruling passion, the joy of my heart, the very sunshine of my existence. In childhood, in boyhood, and in man's estate, I have been a rover; not a mere rambler among the woody glens and upon the hill-tops of my own native land, but an enthusiastic rover throughout the length and breadth of the wide, wide world.

It was a wild, black night of howling storm, the night in which I was born on the foaming bosom of the broad Atlantic Ocean. My father was a sea-captain; my grandfather was a sea-captain; my great-grandfather had been a marine. Nobody could tell positively what occupation his father had followed; but my dear mother used to assert that he had been a midshipman, whose grandfather, on the mother's side, had been an admiral in the royal navy. At any rate, we knew that, as far back as our family could be traced, it had been intimately connected with the great watery waste. Indeed this was the case on both sides of the house; for my mother always went to sea with my father on his long voyages, and so spent the greater part of her life upon the water.

Thus it was, I suppose, that I came to inherit a roving disposition. Soon after I was born, my father, being old, retired from a seafaring life, purchased a small cottage in a fishing village on the west coast of England, and settled down to spend the evening of his life on the shores of that sea which had for so many years been his home. It was not long after this that I began to show the roving spirit that dwelt within me. For some time past my infant legs had been gaining strength, so that I came to be dissatisfied with rubbing the skin off my chubby knees by walking on them, and made many attempts to stand up and walk like a man, all of which attempts, however, resulted in my sitting down violently and in sudden surprise. One day I took advantage of my dear mother's absence to make another effort; and to my joy, I actually succeeded in reaching the doorstep, over which I tumbled into a pool of muddy water that lay before my father's cottage door. Ah, how vividly I remember the horror of my poor mother when she found me sweltering in the mud amongst a group of cackling ducks, and the tenderness with which she stripped off my dripping clothes and washed my dirty little body! From this time forth my rambles became more frequent, and, as I grew older, more distant, until at last I had wandered far and near on the shore and in the woods around our humble dwelling, and did not rest content until my father bound me apprentice to a coasting vessel, and let me go to sea.

For some years I was happy in visiting the sea-ports, and in coasting along the shores of my native land. My Christian name was Ralph,

and my comrades added to this the name of Rover, in consequence of the passion which I always evinced for travelling. Rover was not my real name, but as I never received any other I came at last to answer to it as naturally as to my proper name ; and as it is not a bad one, I see no good reason why I should not introduce myself to the reader as Ralph Rover. My shipmates were kind, good-natured fellows, and they and I got on very well together. They did, indeed, very frequently make game of and banter me, but not unkindly ; and I overheard them sometimes saying that Ralph Rover was a "queer, old-fashioned fellow." This, I must confess, surprised me much, and I pondered the saying long, but could come at no satisfactory conclusion as to that wherein my old-fashionedness lay. It is true I was a quiet lad, and seldom spoke except when spoken to. Moreover, I never could understand the jokes of my companions, even when they were explained to me : which dulness in apprehension occasioned me much grief, however, I tried to make up for it by smiling and looking pleased when I observed that they were laughing at some witticism which I had failed to detect. I was also very fond of inquiring into the nature of things and their causes, and often fell into fits of abstraction while thus engaged in my mind. But in all this I saw nothing that did not seem exceedingly natural, and could by no means understand why my comrades should call me "an old-fashioned fellow."

Now, while engaged in the coasting trade, I fell in with many seamen who had travelled to almost every quarter of the globe ; and I freely confess that my heart glowed ardently within me as they recounted their wild adventures in foreign lands—the dreadful storms they had weathered, the appalling dangers they had escaped, the wonderful creatures they had seen both on the land and in the sea, and the interesting lands and strange people they had visited. But of all the places of which they told me, none captivated and charmed my imagination so much as the Coral Islands of the Southern Seas. They told me of thousands of beautiful fertile islands that had been formed by a small creature called the coral insect, where summer reigned nearly all the year round ; where the trees were laden with a constant harvest of luxuriant fruit ; where the climate was almost perpetually delightful ; yet where, strange to say, men were wild, bloodthirsty savages, excepting in those favoured isles to which the gospel of our Saviour had been conveyed. These exciting accounts had so great an effect upon my mind, that, when I reached the age of fifteen, I resolved to make a voyage to the South Seas.

I had no little difficulty at first in prevailing on my dear parents to let me go ; but when I urged on my father that he would never have become a great captain had he remained in the coasting trade, he saw the truth of what I said, and gave his consent. My dear mother, seeing that my father had made up his mind, no longer offered opposition to my wishes. "But oh, Ralph," she said, on the day I bade her adieu, "come back soon to us, my dear boy, for we are getting old now, Ralph, and may not have many years to live."

I will not take up my reader's time with a minute account of all that occurred before I took my final leave of my dear parents. Suffice it to say that my father placed me under the charge of an old messmate of his own, a merchant captain, who was on the point of sailing to the South Seas in his own ship, the *Arrow*. My mother

gave me her blessing and a small Bible ; and her last request was, that I would never forget to read a chapter every day, and say my prayers ; which I promised, with tears in my eyes, that I would certainly do.

Soon afterwards I went on board the *Arrow*, which was a fine large ship, and set sail for the islands of the Pacific Ocean.

CHAPTER II.

The departure—The sea—My companions—Some account of the wonderful sights we saw on the great deep—A dreadful storm and a frightful wreck.

It was a bright, beautiful, warm day when our ship spread her canvas to the breeze, and sailed for the regions of the south. Oh, how my heart bounded with delight as I listened to the merry chorus of the sailors, while they hauled at the ropes and got in the anchor ! The captain shouted ; the men ran to obey ; the noble ship bent over to the breeze, and the shore gradually faded from my view, while I stood looking on with a kind of feeling that the whole was a delightful dream.

The first thing that struck me as being different from anything I had yet seen during my short career on the sea, was the hoisting of the anchor on deck, and lashing it firmly down with ropes, as if we had now bid adieu to the land for ever, and would require its services no more.

“There, lass,” cried a broad-shouldered jack-tar, giving the fluke of the anchor a hearty slap with his hand after the housing was completed—“there, lass, take a good nap now, for we shan’t ask you to kiss the mud again for many a long day to come !”

And so it was. That anchor did not “kiss the mud” for many long days afterwards ; and when at last it did, it was for the last time !

There were a number of boys in the ship, but two of them were my special favourites. Jack Martin was a tall, strapping, broad-shouldered youth of eighteen, with a handsome, good-humoured, firm face. He had had a good education, was clever and hearty and lion-like in his actions, but mild and quiet in disposition. Jack was a general favourite, and had a peculiar fondness for me. My other companion was Peterkin Gay. He was little, quick, funny, decidedly mischievous, and about fourteen years old. But Peterkin’s mischief was almost always harmless, else he could not have been so much beloved as he was.

“Hallo, youngster !” cried Jack Martin, giving me a slap on the shoulder, the day I joined the ship, “come below, and I’ll show you your berth. You and I are to be mess-mates, and I think we shall be good friends, for I like the look o’ you.”

Jack was right. He and I and Peterkin afterwards became the best and stanchest friends that ever tossed together on the stormy waves.

I shall say little about the first part of our voyage. We had the usual amount of rough weather and calm ; also we saw many strange fish rolling in the sea, and I was greatly delighted one day by seeing a shoal of flying-fish dart out of the water and skim through the air about a foot above the surface. They were pursued by dolphins,

which feed on them, and one flying-fish in its terror flew over the ship, struck on the rigging, and fell upon the deck. Its wings were just fins elongated, and we found that they could never fly far at a time, and never mounted into the air like birds, but skimmed along the surface of the sea. Jack and I had it for dinner, and found it remarkably good.

When we approached Cape Horn, at the southern extremity of America, the weather became very cold and stormy, and the sailors began to tell stories about the furious gales and the dangers of that terrible cape.

"Cape Horn," said one, "is the most horrible headland I ever doubled. I've sailed round it twice already, and both times the ship was a'most blow'd out o' the water."

"I've been round it once," said another, "an' that time the sails were split, and the ropes frozen in the blocks, so that they wouldn't work, and we was all but lost."

"An' I've been round it five times," cried a third, "an' every time was wuss than another, the gales was so tree-mendous!"

"And I've been round it no times at all," cried Peterkin, with an impudent wink of his eye, "an' *that* time I was blow'd inside out!"

Nevertheless, we passed the dreaded cape without much rough weather, and, in the course of a few weeks afterwards, were sailing gently before a warm tropical breeze over the Pacific Ocean. Thus we proceeded on our voyage, sometimes bounding merrily before a fair breeze, at other times floating calmly on the glassy wave and fishing for the curious inhabitants of the deep,—all of which, although the sailors thought little of them, were strange, and interesting, and very wonderful to me.

At last we came among the Coral Islands of the Pacific, and I shall never forget the delight with which I gazed—when we chanced to pass one—at the pure, white, dazzling shores, and the verdant palm trees, which looked bright and beautiful in the sunshine. And often did we three long to be landed on one, imagining that we should certainly find happiness there! Our wish was granted sooner than we expected.

One night, soon after we entered the tropics, an awful storm burst upon our ship. The first squall of wind carried away two of our masts, and left only the foremast standing. Even this, however, was more than enough, for we did not dare to hoist a rag of sail on it. For five days the tempest raged in all its fury. Everything was swept off the decks except one small boat. The steersman was lashed to the wheel, lest he should be washed away, and we all gave ourselves up for lost. The captain said that he had no idea where we were, as we had been blown far out of our course; and we feared much that we might get among the dangerous coral reefs which are so numerous in the Pacific. At daybreak on the sixth morning of the gale we saw land ahead. It was an island encircled by a reef of coral on which the waves broke in fury. There was calm water within this reef, but we could see only one narrow opening into it. For this opening we steered, but ere we reached it a tremendous wave broke on our stern, tore the rudder completely off, and left us at the mercy of the winds and waves.

"It's all over with us now, lads!" said the captain to the men.

"Get the boat ready to launch ; we shall be on the rocks in less than half-an-hour."

The men obeyed in gloomy silence, for they felt that there was little hope of so small a boat living in such a sea.

"Come boys," said Jack Martin, in a grave tone, to me and Peterkin, as we stood on the quarter-deck awaiting our fate—"come, boys ; we three shall stick together. You see it is impossible that the little boat can reach the shore crowded with men. It will be sure to upset, so I mean rather to trust myself to a large oar. I see through the telescope that the ship will strike at the tail of the reef, where the waves break into the quiet water inside ; so, if we manage to cling to the oar till it is driven over the breakers, we may perhaps gain the shore. What say you ; will you join me ?"

We gladly agreed to follow Jack, for he inspired us with confidence, although I could perceive, by the sad tone of his voice, that he had little hope ; and indeed, when I looked at the white waves that lashed the reef and boiled against the rocks as if in fury, I felt that there was but a step between us and death. My heart sank within me ; but at that moment my thoughts turned to my beloved mother, and I remembered those words, which were among the last that she said to me : "Ralph, my dearest child, always remember in the hour of danger to look to your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He alone is both able and willing to save your body and your soul." So I felt much comforted when I thought thereon.

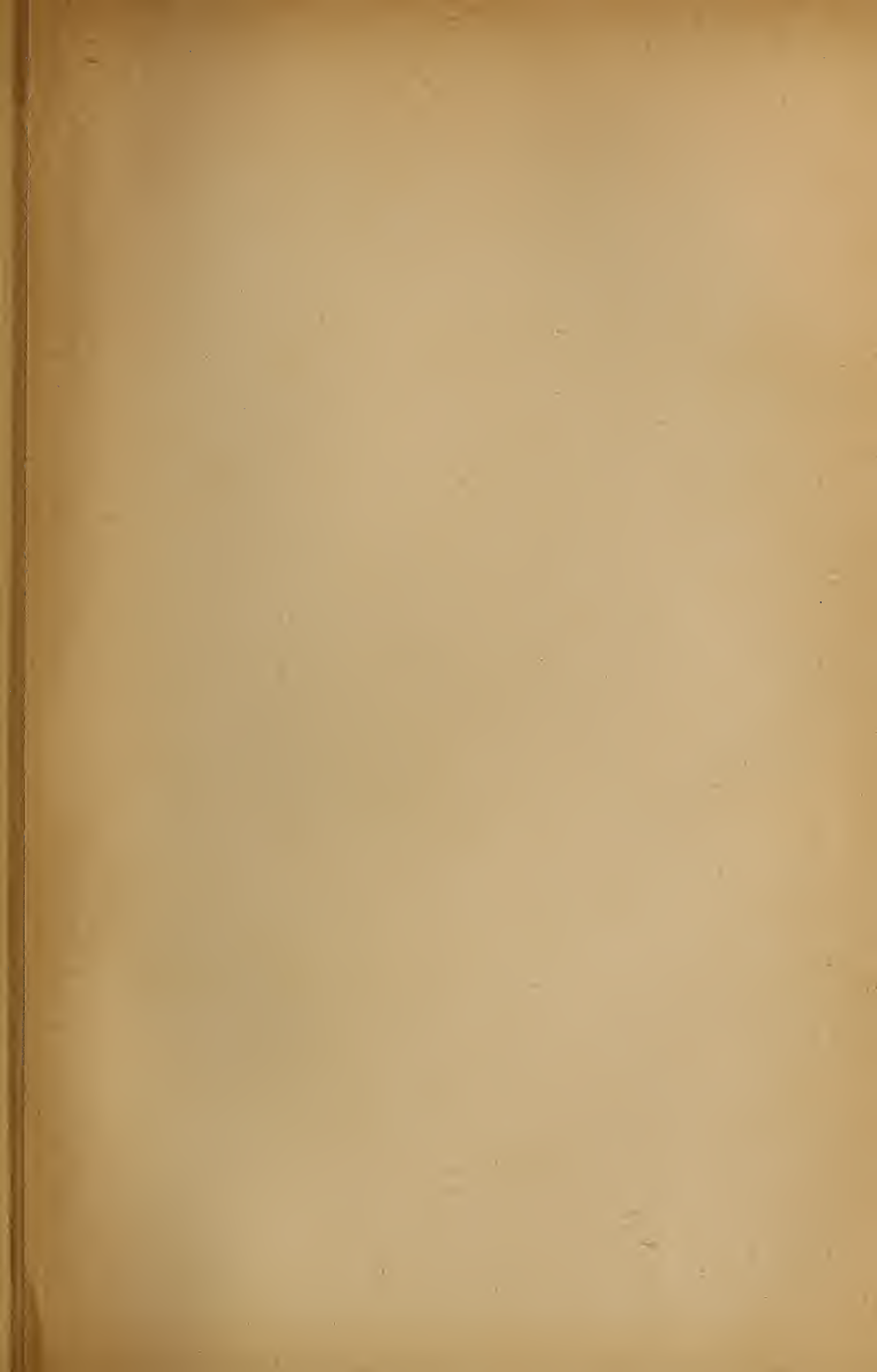
The ship was now very near the rocks. The men were ready with the boat, and the captain beside them giving orders, when a tremendous wave came towards us. We three ran towards the bow to lay hold of our oar, and had barely reached it when the wave fell on the deck with a crash of thunder. At the same moment the ship struck, the foremast broke off close to the deck and went over the side, carrying the boat and men along with it. Our oar got entangled with the wreck, and Jack seized an axe to cut it free, but, owing to the motion of the ship, he missed the cordage and struck the axe deep into the oar. Another wave, however, washed it clear of the wreck. We all seized hold of it, and the next instant we were struggling in the wild sea. The last thing I saw was the boat whirling in the surf, and all the sailors tossed into the foaming waves. Then I became insensible.

On recovering from my swoon, I found myself lying on a bank of soft grass, under shelter of an overhanging rock, with Peterkin on his knees by my side, tenderly bathing my temples with water, and endeavouring to stop the blood that flowed from a wound in my forehead.

CHAPTER III.

The Coral Island—Our first cogitations after landing, and the result of them—We conclude that the island is uninhabited.

THERE is a strange and peculiar sensation experienced in recovering from a state of insensibility, which is almost undescribable : a sort of dreamy, confused consciousness ; a half-waking half-sleeping condition, accompanied with a feeling of weariness, which, however, is by no means disagreeable. As I slowly recovered and heard the





Slowly Recovering.

voice of Peterkin inquiring whether I felt better, I thought that I must have overslept myself, and should be sent to the mast-head for being lazy ; but before I could leap up in haste, the thought seemed to vanish suddenly away, and I fancied that I must have been ill. Then a balmy breeze fanned my cheek, and I thought of home, and the garden at the back of my father's cottage, with its luxuriant flowers, and the sweet-scented honeysuckle that my dear mother trained so carefully upon the trellised porch. But the roaring of the surf put these delightful thoughts to flight, and I was back again at sea, watching the dolphins and the flying-fish, and reefing topsails off the wild and stormy Cape Horn. Gradually the roar of the surf became louder and more distinct. I thought of being wrecked far, far away from my native land, and slowly opened my eyes to meet those of my companion Jack, who, with a look of intense anxiety, was gazing into my face.

"Speak to us, my dear Ralph," whispered Jack tenderly. "Are you better now?"

I smiled and looking up, saying, "Better ! why, what do you mean, Jack ! I'm quite well."

"Then what are you shamming for, and frightening us in this way?" said Peterkin, smiling through his tears ; for the poor boy had been really under the impression that I was dying.

I now raised myself on my elbow, and putting my hand to my forehead, found that it had been cut pretty severely, and that I had lost a good deal of blood.

"Come, come, Ralph," said Jack, pressing me gently backward, "lie down, my boy ; you're not right yet. Wet your lips with this water ; it's cool and clear as crystal. I got it from a spring close at hand. There now, don't say a word, hold your tongue," said he, seeing me about to speak. "I'll tell you all about it, but you must not utter a syllable till you have rested well."

"Oh ! don't stop him from speaking, Jack," said Peterkin, who, now that his fears for my safety were removed, busied himself in erecting a shelter of broken branches in order to protect me from the wind ; which, however, was almost unnecessary, for the rock beside which I had been laid completely broke the force of the gale. "Let him speak, Jack, it's a comfort to hear that he is alive, after lying there stiff and white and sulky for a whole hour, just like an Egyptian mummy. Never saw such a fellow as you are, Ralph ; always up to mischief. You've almost knocked out all my teeth and more than half choked me, and now you go shamming dead ! It's very wicked of you, indeed it is."

While Peterkin ran on in this style, my faculties became quite clear again, and I began to understand my position. "What do you mean by saying I half choked you, Peterkin?" said I.

"What do I mean ? Is English not your mother-tongue, or do you want me to repeat it in French, by way of making it clearer ? Don't you remember—"

"I remember nothing," said I, interrupting him, "after we were thrown into the sea."

"Hush, Peterkin !" said Jack ; "you're exciting Ralph with your nonsense. I'll explain it to you. You recollect that after the ship struck, we three sprang over the bow into the sea : well, I noticed that the oar struck your head and gave you that cut on the brow,

which nearly stunned you, so that you grasped Peterkin round the neck without knowing apparently what you were about. In doing so you pushed the telescope—which you clung to as if it had been your life—against Peterkin's mouth—”

“Pushed it against his mouth!” interrupted Peterkin; “say crammed it down his throat. Why, there's a distinct mark of the brass rim on the back of my gullet at this moment!”

“Well, well, be that as it may,” continued Jack, “you clung to him, Ralph, till I feared you really would choke him; but I saw that he had a good hold of the oar, so I exerted myself to the utmost to push you towards the shore, which we luckily reached without much trouble, for the water inside the reef is quite calm.”

“But the captain and crew, what of them?” I inquired anxiously.

Jack shook his head.

“Are they lost?”

“No, they are not lost, I hope, but I fear there is not much chance of their being saved. The ship struck at the very tail of the island on which we are cast. When the boat was tossed into the sea it fortunately did not upset, although it shipped a good deal of water, and all the men managed to scramble into it; but before they could get the oars out the gale carried them past the point and away to leeward of the island. After we landed I saw them endeavouring to pull towards us; but as they had only one pair of oars out of the eight that belong to the boat, and as the wind was blowing right in their teeth, they gradually lost ground. Then I saw them put about and hoist some sort of sail—a blanket, I fancy, for it was too small for the boat—and in half-an-hour they were out of sight.”

“Poor fellows!” I murmured sorrowfully.

“But the more I think about it, I've better hope of them,” continued Jack, in a more cheerful tone. “You see, Ralph, I've read a great deal about these South Sea Islands, and I know that in many places they are scattered about in thousands over the sea, so they're almost sure to fall in with one of them before long.”

“I'm sure I hope so,” said Peterkin earnestly. “But what has become of the wreck, Jack? I saw you clambering up the rocks there while I was watching Ralph. Did you say she had gone to pieces?”

“No, she has not gone to pieces, but she has gone to the bottom,” replied Jack. “As I said before, she struck on the tail of the island and stove in her bow, but the next breaker swung her clear, and she floated away to leeward. The poor fellows in the boat made a hard struggle to reach her, but long before they came near her she filled and went down. It was after she foundered that I saw them trying to pull to the island.”

There was a long silence after Jack ceased speaking, and I have no doubt that each was revolving in his mind our extraordinary position. For my part, I cannot say that my reflections were very agreeable. I knew that we were on an island, for Jack had said so, but whether it was inhabited or not I did not know. If it should be inhabited, I felt certain, from all I had heard of South Sea Islanders, that we should be roasted alive and eaten. If it should turn out to be uninhabited, I fancied that we should be starved to death. “Oh,” thought I, “if the ship had only struck on the rocks we might have done pretty well, for we could have obtained provisions from her,

and tools to enable us to build a shelter ; but now—alas ! alas ! we are lost !” These last words I uttered aloud in my distress.

“Lost ! Ralph ?” exclaimed Jack, while a smile overspread his hearty countenance. “Saved, you should have said. Your cogitations seem to have taken a wrong road, and led you to a wrong conclusion.”

“Do you know what conclusion I have come to ?” said Peterkin. “I have made up my mind that it’s capital—first rate—the best thing that ever happened to us, and the most splendid prospect that ever lay before three young tars. We’ve got an island all to ourselves. We’ll take possession in the name of the king ; we’ll go and enter the service of its black inhabitants. Of course we’ll rise, naturally, to the top of affairs. White men always do in savage countries. You shall be king, Jack ; Ralph, prime minister ; and I shall be—”

“The court-jester,” interrupted Jack.

“No,” retorted Peterkin ; “I’ll have no title at all. I shall merely accept a highly responsible situation under government ; for you see, Jack, I’m fond of having an enormous salary and nothing to do.”

“But suppose there are no natives ?”

“Then we’ll build a charming villa, and plant a lovely garden round it, stuck all full of the most splendiferous tropical flowers, and we’ll farm the land, plant, sow, reap, eat, sleep, and be merry.”

“But to be serious,” said Jack, assuming a grave expression of countenance, which I observed always had the effect of checking Peterkin’s disposition to make fun of everything, “we are really in rather an uncomfortable position. If this is a desert island, we shall have to live very much like the wild beasts, for we have not a tool of any kind, not even a knife.”

“Yes, we have *that*,” said Peterkin, fumbling in his trousers pocket, from which he drew forth a small penknife with only one blade, and that was broken.

“Well, that’s better than nothing. But come,” said Jack, rising ; “we are wasting our time in *talking* instead of *doing*. You seem well enough to walk now, Ralph. Let us see what we have got in our pockets, and then let us climb some hill and ascertain what sort of island we have been cast upon, for, whether good or bad, it seems likely to be our home for some time to come.”

CHAPTER IV.

We examine into our personal property, and make a happy discovery—Our island described—Jack proves himself to be learned and sagacious above his fellows—Curious discoveries—Natural lemonade !

WE now seated ourselves upon a rock, and began to examine into our personal property. When we reached the shore, after being wrecked, my companions had taken off part of their clothes and spread them out in the sun to dry ; for although the gale was raging fiercely, there was not a single cloud in the bright sky. They had also stripped off most part of my wet clothes and spread them also on the rocks. Having resumed our garments, we now searched all our pockets with the utmost care, and laid their contents out on a flat stone before us ; and now that our minds were fully alive to our condition, it was with no little anxiety that we turned our several

pockets inside out, in order that nothing might escape us. When all was collected together, we found that our worldly goods consisted of the following articles :—

First—A small penknife with a single blade broken off about the middle and very rusty, besides having two or three notches on its edge. (Peterkin said of this, with his usual pleasantry, that it would do for a saw as well as a knife, which was a great advantage.) Second—An old German-silver pencil-case without any lead in it. Third—A piece of whip-cord about six yards long. Fourth—A sail-maker's needle of a small size. Fifth—A ship's telescope, which I happened to have in my hand at the time the ship struck, and which I had clung to firmly all the time I was in the water. Indeed it was with difficulty that Jack got it out of my grasp when I was lying insensible on the shore. I cannot understand why I kept such a firm hold of this telescope. They say that a drowning man will clutch at a straw. Perhaps it may have been some such feeling in me, for I did not know that it was in my hand at the time we were wrecked. However, we felt some pleasure in having it with us now, although we did not see that it could be of much use to us, as the glass at the small end was broken to pieces. Our sixth article was a brass ring which Jack always wore on his little finger. I never understood why he wore it, for Jack was not vain of his appearance, and did not seem to care for ornaments of any kind. Peterkin said "it was in memory of the girl he left behind him!" But as he never spoke of this girl to either of us, I am inclined to think that Peterkin was either jesting or mistaken. In addition to these articles we had a little bit of tinder, and the clothes on our backs. These last were as follows :—

Each of us had on a pair of stout canvas trousers, and a pair of sailors' thick shoes. Jack wore a red flannel shirt, a blue jacket, and a red Kilmarnock bonnet or night-cap, besides a pair of worsted socks, and a cotton pocket handkerchief with sixteen portraits of Lord Nelson printed on it, and a union-jack in the middle. Peterkin had on a striped flannel shirt—which he wore outside his trousers, and belted round his waist, after the manner of a tunic—and a round black straw hat. He had no jacket, having thrown it off just before we were cast into the sea; but this was not of much consequence, as the climate of the island proved to be extremely mild,—so much so, indeed, that Jack and I often preferred to go about without our jackets. Peterkin had also a pair of white cotton socks, and a blue handkerchief with white spots all over it. My own costume consisted of a blue flannel shirt, a blue jacket, a black cap, and a pair of worsted socks, besides the shoes and canvas trousers already mentioned. This was all we had, and besides these things we had nothing else; but when we thought of the danger from which we had escaped, and how much worse off we might have been had the ship struck on the reef during the night, we felt very thankful that we were possessed of so much, although, I must confess, we sometimes wished that we had had a little more.

While we were examining these things and talking about them, Jack suddenly started and exclaimed,—

"The oar! we have forgotten the oar."

"What good will that do us?" said Peterkin; "there's wood enough on the island to make a thousand oars."

"Ay, lad," replied Jack ; "but there's a bit of hoop iron at the end of it, and that may be of much use to us."

"Very true," said I, "let us go fetch it ;" and with that we all three rose and hastened down to the beach. I still felt a little weak from loss of blood, so that my companions soon began to leave me behind ; but Jack perceived this, and, with his usual considerate good nature, turned back to help me. This was now the first time that I had looked well about me since landing, as the spot where I had been laid was covered with thick bushes, which almost hid the country from our view. As we now emerged from among these and walked down the sandy beach together, I cast my eyes about, and truly my heart glowed within me and my spirits rose at the beautiful prospect which I beheld on every side. The gale had suddenly died away, just as if it had blown furiously till it dashed our ship upon the rocks, and had nothing more to do after accomplishing that. The island on which we stood was hilly, and covered almost everywhere with the most beautiful and richly-coloured trees, bushes, and shrubs, none of which I knew the names of at that time, except, indeed, the cocoa-nut palms, which I recognised at once from the many pictures that I had seen of them before I left home. A sandy beach of dazzling whiteness lined this bright green shore, and upon it there fell a gentle ripple of the sea. This last astonished me much, for I recollected that at home the sea used to fall in huge billows on the shore long after a storm had subsided. But on casting my glance out to sea the cause became apparent. About a mile distant from the shore I saw the great billows of the ocean rolling like a green wall, and falling with a long, loud roar upon a low coral reef, where they were dashed into white foam and flung up in clouds of spray. This spray sometimes flew exceedingly high, and every here and there a beautiful rainbow was formed for a moment among the falling drops. We afterwards found that this coral reef extended quite round the island, and formed a natural breakwater to it. Beyond this the sea rose and tossed violently from the effects of the storm ; but between the reef and the shore it was as calm and smooth as a pond.

My heart was filled with more delight than I can express at sight of so many glorious objects, and my thoughts turned suddenly to the contemplation of the Creator of them all. I mention this the more gladly, because at that time, I am ashamed to say, I very seldom thought of my Creator, although I was constantly surrounded by the most beautiful and wonderful of His works. I observed, from the expression of my companion's countenance, that he too derived much joy from the splendid scenery, which was all the more agreeable to us after our long voyage on the salt sea. There the breeze was fresh and cold, but here it was delightfully mild ; and when a puff blew off the land, it came laden with the most exquisite perfume that can be imagined. While we thus gazed, we were startled by a loud "Huzza !" from Peterkin, and on looking towards the edge of the sea, we saw him capering and jumping about like a monkey, and ever and anon tugging with all his might at something that lay upon the shore.

"What an odd fellow he is, to be sure !" said Jack, taking me by the arm and hurrying forward ; "come, let us hasten to see what it is."

"Here it is boys, hurrah ! come along. Just what we want," cried Peterkin, as we drew near, still tugging with all his power. "First rate ; just the very ticket !"

I need scarcely say to my readers that my companion Peterkin was in the habit of using very remarkable and peculiar phrases. And I am free to confess that I did not well understand the meaning of some of them—such, for instance, as "the very ticket ;" but I think it my duty to recount everything relating to my adventures with a strict regard to truthfulness in as far as my memory serves me ; so I write, as nearly as possible, the exact words that my companions spoke. I often asked Peterkin to explain what he meant by "ticket," but he always answered me by going into fits of laughter. However, by observing the occasions on which he used it, I came to understand that it meant to show that something was remarkably good or fortunate.

On coming up we found that Peterkin was vainly endeavouring to pull the axe out of the oar, into which, it will be remembered, Jack struck it while endeavouring to cut away the cordage among which it had become entangled at the bow of the ship. Fortunately for us the axe had remained fast in the oar, and even now all Peterkin's strength could not draw it out of the cut.

"Ah ! that is capital indeed," cried Jack, at the same time giving the axe a wrench that plucked it out of the tough wood. "How fortunate this is ! It will be of more value to us than a hundred knives, and the edge is quite new and sharp."

"I'll answer for the toughness of the handle at any rate," cried Peterkin ; "my arms are nearly pulled out of the sockets. But see here, our luck is great. There is iron on the blade." He pointed to a piece of hoop iron as he spoke, which had been nailed round the blade of the oar to prevent it from splitting.

This also was a fortunate discovery. Jack went down on his knees, and with the edge of the axe began carefully to force out the nails. But as they were firmly fixed in, and the operation blunted our axe, we carried the oar up with us to the place where we had left the rest of our things, intending to burn the wood away from the iron at a more convenient time.

"Now, lads," said Jack, after we had laid it on the stone which contained our little all, "I propose that we should go to the tail of the island, where the ship struck, which is only a quarter of a mile off, and see if anything else has been thrown ashore. I don't expect anything, but it is well to see. When we get back here it will be time to have our supper and prepare our beds."

"Agreed !" cried Peterkin and I together, as, indeed, we would have agreed to any proposal that Jack made, for besides his being older and much stronger and taller than either of us, he was a very clever fellow, and I think would have induced people much older than himself to choose him for their leader, especially if they required to be led on a bold enterprise.

Now, as we hastened along the white beach, which shone so brightly in the rays of the setting sun that our eyes were quite dazzled by its glare, it suddenly came into Peterkin's head that we had nothing to eat except the wild berries which grew in profusion at our feet.

"What shall we do, Jack ?" said he, with a rueful look ; "perhaps they may be poisonous !"

"No fear," replied Jack confidently; "I have observed that a few of them are not unlike some of the berries that grow wild on our own native hills. Besides, I saw one or two strange birds eating them just a few minutes ago, and what won't kill the birds won't kill us. But look up there, Peterkin," continued Jack, pointing to the branched head of a cocoa-nut palm. "There are nuts for us in all stages."

"So there are!" cried Peterkin, who, being of a very unobservant nature, had been too much taken up with other things to notice anything so high above his head as the fruit of a palm tree. But whatever faults my young comrade had, he could not be blamed for want of activity or animal spirits. Indeed, the nuts had scarcely been pointed out to him when he bounded up the tall stem of the tree like a squirrel, and in a few minutes returned with three nuts, each as large as a man's fist.

"You had better keep them till we return," said Jack. "Let us finish our work before eating."

"So be it, captain; go ahead," cried Peterkin, thrusting the nuts into his trousers pocket. "In fact I don't want to eat just now, but I would give a good deal for a drink. Oh that I could find a spring! but I don't see the smallest sign of one hereabouts. I say, Jack, how does it happen that you seem to be up to everything? You have told us the names of half-a-dozen trees already, and yet you say that you were never in the South Seas before."

"I'm not up to *everything*, Peterkin, as you'll find out ere long," replied Jack, with a smile; "but I have been a great reader of books of travel and adventure all my life, and that has put me up to a good many things that you are, perhaps, not acquainted with."

"O Jack, that's all humbug. If you begin to lay everything to the credit of books, I'll quite lose my opinion of you," cried Peterkin with a look of contempt. "I've seen a lot o' fellows that were *always* poring over books, and when they came to try to *do* anything, they were no better than baboons!"

"You are quite right," retorted Jack; "and I have seen a lot of fellows who never looked into books at all, who knew nothing about anything except the things they had actually seen, and very little they knew even about these. Indeed, some were so ignorant that they did not know that cocoa nuts grew on cocoa-nut trees."

I could not refrain from laughing at this rebuke, for there was much truth in it, as to Peterkin's ignorance.

"Humph! maybe you're right," answered Peterkin; "but I would not give *tuppence* for a man of books, if he had nothing else in him."

"Neither would I," said Jack; "but that's no reason why you should run books down, or think less of me for having read them. Suppose now, Peterkin, that you wanted to build a ship, and I were to give you a long and particular account of the way to do it, would not that be very useful?"

"No doubt of it," said Peterkin, laughing.

"And suppose I were to write the account in a letter instead of telling you in words, would that be less useful?"

"Well—no, perhaps not."

"Well, suppose I were to print it, and send it to you in the form of a book, would it not be as good and useful as ever?"

"Oh, bother! Jack, you're a philosopher, and that's worse than anything!" cried Peterkin, with a look of pretended horror.

"Very well, Peterkin, we shall see," returned Jack, halting under the shade of a cocoa-nut tree. "You said you were thirsty just a minute ago; now jump up that tree and bring down a nut—not a ripe one, bring a green, unripe one."

Peterkin looked surprised, but seeing that Jack was in earnest, he obeyed.

"Now, cut a hole in it with your penknife, and clap it to your mouth, old fellow," said Jack.

Peterkin did as he was directed, and we both burst into uncontrollable laughter at the changes that instantly passed over his expressive countenance. No sooner had he put the nut to his mouth, and thrown back his head in order to catch what came out of it, than his eyes opened to twice their ordinary size with astonishment, while his throat moved vigorously in the act of swallowing. Then a smile and look of intense delight overspread his face, except, indeed, the mouth, which, being firmly fixed to the hole in the nut, could not take part in the expression; but he endeavoured to make up for this by winking at us excessively with his right eye. At length he stopped, and, drawing a long breath, exclaimed,—

"Nectar! perfect nectar! I say, Jack, you're a Briton—the best fellow I ever met in my life.—Only taste that!" said he, turning to me and holding the nut to my mouth. I immediately drank, and certainly I was much surprised at the delightful liquid that flowed copiously down my throat. It was extremely cool, and had a sweet taste, mingled with acid; in fact, it was the likeliest thing to lemonade I ever tasted, and was most grateful and refreshing. I handed the nut to Jack, who, after tasting it, said, "Now, Peterkin, you unbeliever, I never saw or tasted a cocoa nut in my life before, except those sold in shops at home; but I once read that the green nuts contain that stuff, and you see it is true!"

"And pray," asked Peterkin, "what sort of 'stuff' does the ripe nut contain?"

"A hollow kernel," answered Jack, "with a liquid like milk in it; but it does not satisfy thirst so well as hunger. It is very wholesome food, I believe."

"Meat and drink on the same tree!" cried Peterkin, "washing in the sea, lodging on the ground,—and all for nothing! My dear boys, we're set up for life; it must be the ancient Paradise,—hurrah!" and Peterkin tossed his straw hat in the air, and ran along the beach hallooing like a madman with delight.

We afterwards found, however, that these lovely islands were very unlike Paradise in many things. But more of this in its proper place.

We had now come to the point of rocks on which the ship had struck, but did not find a single article, although we searched carefully among the coral rocks, which at this place jutted out so far as nearly to join the reef that encircled the island. Just as we were about to return, however, we saw something black floating in a little cove that had escaped our observation. Running forward, we drew it from the water, and found it to be a long, thick, leather boot, such as fishermen at home wear; and a few paces further on we picked up its fellow. We at once recognized these as having belonged to our captain, for he had worn them during the whole of the storm, in order to guard his legs from the waves and spray that constantly

washed over our decks. My first thought on seeing them was that our dear captain had been drowned ; but Jack soon put my mind more at rest on that point, by saying that if the captain had been drowned with the boots on, he would certainly have been washed ashore along with them, and that he had no doubt whatever he had kicked them off while in the sea, that he might swim more easily.

Peterkin immediately put them on, but they were so large that, as Jack said, they would have done for boots, trousers, and vest too. I also tried them, but although I was long enough in the legs for them, they were much too large in the feet for me : so we handed them to Jack, who was anxious to make me keep them ; but as they fitted his large limbs and feet as if they had been made for him, I would not hear of it, so he consented at last to use them. I may remark, however, that Jack did not use them often, as they were extremely heavy.

It was beginning to grow dark when we returned to our encampment ; so we put off our visit to the top of a hill till next day, and employed the light that yet remained to us in cutting down a quantity of boughs and the broad leaves of a tree of which none of us knew the name. With these we erected a sort of rustic bower, in which we meant to pass the night. There was no absolute necessity for this, because the air of our island was so genial and balmy that we could have slept quite well without any shelter ; but we were so little used to sleeping in the open air, that we did not quite relish the idea of lying down without any covering over us ; besides, our bower would shelter us from the night-dews or rain, if any should happen to fall. Having strewed the floor with leaves and dry grass, we bethought ourselves of supper.

But it now occurred to us, for the first time, that we had no means of making a fire.

"Now, there's a fix !—what shall we do ?" said Peterkin, while we both turned our eyes to Jack, to whom we always looked in our difficulties. Jack seemed not a little perplexed.

"There are flints enough, no doubt, on the beach," said he, "but they are of no use without a steel. However, we must try." So saying, he went to the beach, and soon returned with two flints. On one of these he placed the tinder, and endeavoured to ignite it ; but it was with great difficulty that a very small spark was struck out of the flints, and the tinder, being a bad, hard piece, would not catch. He then tried the bit of hoop iron, which would not strike fire at all ; and after that the back of the axe, with no better success. During all these trials Peterkin sat with his hands in his pockets, gazing with a most melancholy visage at our comrade, his face growing longer and more miserable at each successive failure.

"Oh dear !" he sighed ; "I would not care a button for the cooking of our victuals—perhaps they don't need it—but it's so dismal to eat one's supper in the dark, and we have had such a capital day, that it's a pity to finish off in this glum style. Oh, I have it !" he cried, starting up : "the spy-glass—the big glass at the end is a burning-glass !"

"You forget that we have no sun," said I.

Peterkin was silent. In his sudden recollection of the telescope he had quite overlooked the absence of the sun.

"Ah, boys, I've got it now !" exclaimed Jack, rising and cutting a

branch from a neighbouring bush, which he stripped of its leaves. I recollect seeing this done once at home. Hand me the bit of whip-cord." With the cord and branch Jack soon formed a bow. Then he cut a piece, about three inches long, off the end of a dead branch, which he pointed at the two ends. Round this he passed the cord of the bow, and placed one end against his chest, which was protected from its point by a chip of wood; the other point he placed against the bit of tinder, and then began to saw vigorously with the bow, just as a blacksmith does with his drill while boring a hole in a piece of iron. In a few seconds the tinder began to smoke; in less than a minute it caught fire; and in less than a quarter of an hour we were drinking our lemonade and eating cocoa nuts round a fire that would have roasted an entire sheep, while the smoke, flames, and sparks flew up among the broad leaves of the overhanging palm trees, and cast a warm glow upon our leafy bower.

That night the starry sky looked down through the gently-rustling trees upon our slumbers, and the distant roaring of the surf upon the coral reef was our lullaby.

CHAPTER V.

Morning, and cogitations connected therewith—We luxuriate in the sea, try our diving powers, and make enchanting excursions among the coral groves at the bottom of the ocean—The wonders of the deep enlarged upon.

WHAT a joyful thing it is to awaken, on a fresh, glorious morning, and find the rising sun staring into your face with dazzling brilliancy! to see the birds twittering in the bushes, and to hear the murmuring of a rill, or the soft hissing ripples as they fall upon the sea-shore! At any time and in any place such sights and sounds are most charming, but more especially are they so when one awakens to them, for the first time, in a novel and romantic situation, with the soft sweet air of a tropical climate mingling with the fresh smell of the sea, and stirring the strange leaves that flutter overhead and around one, or ruffling the plumage of the stranger birds that fly inquiringly around, as if to demand what business we have to intrude uninvited on their domains. When I awoke on the morning after the shipwreck, I found myself in this most delightful condition; and as I lay on my back upon my bed of leaves, gazing up through the branches of the cocoa-nut trees into the clear, blue sky, and watched the few fleecy clouds that passed slowly across it, my heart expanded more and more with an exulting gladness, the like of which I had never felt before. While I meditated, my thoughts again turned to the great and kind Creator of this beautiful world, as they had done on the previous day, when I first beheld the sea and the coral reef, with the mighty waves dashing over it into the calm waters of the lagoon.

While thus meditating, I naturally bethought me of my Bible, for I had faithfully kept the promise, which I gave at parting to my beloved mother, that I would read it every morning; and it was with a feeling of dismay that I remembered I had left it in the ship. I was much troubled about this. However, I consoled myself with reflecting that I could keep the second part of my promise to her—namely, that I should never omit to say my prayers. So I rose

quietly, lest I should disturb my companions, who were still asleep, and stepped aside into the bushes for this purpose.

On my return I found them still slumbering, so I again lay down to think over our situation. Just at that moment I was attracted by the sight of a very small parrot, which Jack afterwards told me was called a paroquet. It was seated on a twig that overhung Peterkin's head, and I was speedily lost in admiration of its bright green plumage, which was mingled with other gay colours. While I looked I observed that the bird turned its head slowly from side to side and looked downwards, first with the one eye and then with the other. On glancing downwards I observed that Peterkin's mouth was wide open, and that this remarkable bird was looking into it. Peterkin used to say that I had not an atom of fun in my composition, and that I never could understand a joke. In regard to the latter, perhaps he was right; yet I think that, when they were explained to me, I understood jokes as well as most people: but in regard to the former he must certainly have been wrong, for this bird seemed to me to be extremely funny; and I could not help thinking that, if it should happen to faint, or slip its foot, and fall off the twig into Peterkin's mouth, he would perhaps think it funny too! Suddenly the paroquet bent down its head and uttered a loud scream in his face. This awoke him, and, with a cry of surprise, he started up, while the foolish bird flew precipitately away.

"Oh you monster!" cried Peterkin, shaking his fist at the bird. Then he yawned, and rubbed his eyes, and asked what o'clock it was.

I smiled at this question, and answered that, as our watches were at the bottom of the sea, I could not tell, but it was a little past sunrise.

Peterkin now began to remember where we were. As he looked up into the bright sky, and snuffed the scented air, his eyes glistened with delight, and he uttered a faint "Hurrah!" and yawned again. Then he gazed slowly round, till, observing the calm sea through an opening in the bushes, he started suddenly up as if he had received an electric shock, uttered a vehement shout, flung off his garments, and, rushing over the white sands, plunged into the water. The cry awoke Jack, who rose on his elbow with a look of grave surprise; but this was followed by a quiet smile of intelligence on seeing Peterkin in the water. With an energy that he only gave way to in moments of excitement, Jack bounded to his feet, threw off his clothes, shook back his hair, and, with a lion-like spring, dashed over the sands and plunged into the sea with such force as quite to envelop Peterkin in a shower of spray. Jack was a remarkably good swimmer and diver, so that after his plunge we saw no sign of him for nearly a minute; after which he suddenly emerged, with a cry of joy, a good many yards out from the shore. My spirits were so much raised by seeing all this that I, too, hastily threw off my garments and endeavoured to imitate Jack's vigorous bounds; but I was so awkward that my foot caught on a stump and I fell to the ground; then I slipped on a stone while running over the sand, and nearly fell again, much to the amusement of Peterkin, who laughed heartily, and called me a "slow coach," while Jack cried out, "Come along, Ralph, and I'll help you." However, when I got into the water I managed very well, for I was really a good swimmer, and diver too. I could not, indeed, equal Jack, who was superior to any

Englishman I ever saw, but I infinitely surpassed Peterkin, who could only swim a little, and could not dive at all.

While Peterkin enjoyed himself in the shallow water and in running along the beach, Jack and I swam out into the deep water, and occasionally dived for stones. I shall never forget my surprise and delight on first beholding the bottom of the sea. As I have before stated, the water within the reef was as calm as a pond; and, as there was no wind, it was quite clear, from the surface to the bottom, so that we could see down easily even at a depth of twenty or thirty yards. When Jack and I dived in shallower water, we expected to have found sand and stones, instead of which we found ourselves in what appeared really to be an enchanted garden. The whole of the bottom of the lagoon, as we called the calm water within the reef, was covered with coral of every shape, size, and hue. Some portions were formed like large mushrooms; others appeared like the brain of a man, having stalks or necks attached to them; but the most common kind was a species of branching coral, and some portions were of a lovely pale pink colour, others pure white. Among this there grew large quantities of sea-weed of the richest hues imaginable, and of the most graceful forms; while innumerable fishes—blue, red, yellow, green, and striped—sported in and out amongst the flower-beds of this submarine garden, and did not appear to be at all afraid of our approaching them.

On darting to the surface for breath, after our first dive, Jack and I rose close to each other.

"Did you ever in your life, Ralph, see anything so lovely?" said Jack, as he flung the spray from his hair.

"Never," I replied. "It appears to me like fairy realms. I can scarcely believe that we are not dreaming."

"Dreaming!" cried Jack; "do you know, Ralph, I'm half tempted to think that we really are dreaming. But if so I am resolved to make the most of it, and dream another dive; so here goes,—down again, my boy!"

We took the second dive together, and kept beside each other while under water; and I was greatly surprised to find that we could keep down much longer than I ever recollect having done in our own seas at home. I believe this was owing to the heat of the water, which was so warm that we afterwards found we could remain in it for two and three hours at a time without feeling any unpleasant effects such as we used to experience in the sea at home. When Jack reached the bottom, he grasped the coral stems, and crept along on his hands and knees, peeping under the sea-weed and among the rocks. I observed him also pick up one or two large oysters, and retain them in his grasp, as if he meant to take them up with him, so I also gathered a few. Suddenly he made a grasp at a fish with blue and yellow stripes on its back, and actually touched its tail, but did not catch it. At this he turned towards me and attempted to smile; but no sooner had he done so than he sprang like an arrow to the surface, where, on following him, I found him gasping and coughing, and spitting water from his mouth. In a few minutes he recovered, and we both turned to swim ashore.

"I declare, Ralph," said he, "that I actually tried to laugh under water."

"So I saw," I replied; "and I observed that you very nearly caught

that fish by the tail. It would have done capitally for breakfast if you had."

"Breakfast enough here," said he, holding up the oysters, as we landed and ran up the beach.—"Hallo, Peterkin! here you are, boy. Split open these fellows while Ralph and I put on our clothes. They'll agree with the cocoa nuts excellently, I have no doubt."

Peterkin, who was already dressed, took the oysters, and opened them with the edge of our axe, exclaiming, "Now, that is capital. There's nothing I'm so fond of."

"Ah! that's lucky," remarked Jack. "I'll be able to keep you in good order now, Master Peterkin. You know you can't dive any better than a cat. So, sir, whenever you behave ill, you shall have no oysters for breakfast."

"I'm very glad that our prospect of breakfast is so good," said I, "for I'm very hungry."

"Here, then, stop your mouth with that, Ralph," said Peterkin, holding a large oyster to my lips. I opened my mouth and swallowed it in silence, and really it was remarkably good.

We now set ourselves earnestly about our preparations for spending the day. We had no difficulty with the fire this morning, as our burning-glass was an admirable one; and while we roasted a few oysters and ate our cocoa nuts, we held a long, animated conversation about our plans for the future. What those plans were, and how we carried them into effect, the reader shall see hereafter.

CHAPTER VI.

An excursion into the interior, in which we make many valuable and interesting discoveries—We get a dreadful fright—The bread-fruit tree—Wonderful peculiarity of some of the fruit trees—Signs of former inhabitants.

OUR first care after breakfast, was to place the few articles we possessed in the crevice of a rock at the farther end of a small cave which we discovered near our encampment. This cave, we hoped, might be useful to us afterwards as a store-house. Then we cut two large clubs off a species of very hard tree which grew near at hand. One of these was given to Peterkin, the other to me, and Jack armed himself with the axe. We took these precautions because we purposed to make an excursion to the top of the mountains of the interior, in order to obtain a better view of our island. Of course we knew not what dangers might befall us by the way, so thought it best to be prepared.

Having completed our arrangements and carefully extinguished our fire, we sallied forth and walked a short distance along the sea-beach, till we came to the entrance of a valley, through which flowed the rivulet before mentioned. Here we turned our backs on the sea and struck into the interior.

The prospect that burst upon our view on entering the valley was truly splendid. On either side of us there was a gentle rise in the land, which thus formed two ridges about a mile apart on each side of the valley. These ridges—which, as well as the low grounds between them, were covered with trees and shrubs of the most luxuriant kind—continued to recede inland for about two miles, when they joined the foot of a small mountain. This hill rose rather

abruptly from the head of the valley, and was likewise entirely covered even to the top with trees, except on one particular spot near the left shoulder, where was a bare and rocky place of a broken and savage character. Beyond this hill we could not see, and we therefore directed our course up the banks of the rivulet towards the foot of it, intending to climb to the top, should that be possible, as, indeed, we had no doubt it was.

Jack being the wisest and boldest among us, took the lead, carrying the axe on his shoulder. Peterkin, with his enormous club, came second, as he said he should like to be in a position to defend me if any danger should threaten. I brought up the rear, but, having been more taken up with the wonderful and curious things I saw at starting than with thoughts of possible danger, I had very foolishly left my club behind me. Although, as I have said, the trees and bushes were very luxuriant, they were not so thickly crowded together as to hinder our progress among them. We were able to wind in and out, and to follow the banks of the stream quite easily, although, it is true, the height and thickness of the foliage prevented us from seeing far ahead. But sometimes a jutting-out rock on the hillsides afforded us a position whence we could enjoy the romantic view and mark our progress towards the foot of the hill. I was particularly struck, during the walk, with the richness of the undergrowth in most places, and recognised many berries and plants that resembled those of my native land, especially a tall elegantly-formed fern, which emitted an agreeable perfume. There were several kinds of flowers, too, but I did not see so many of these as I should have expected in such a climate. We also saw a great variety of small birds of bright plumage, and many paroquets similar to the one that awoke Peterkin so rudely in the morning.

Thus we advanced to the foot of the hill without encountering anything to alarm us, except, indeed, once, when we were passing close under a part of the hill which was hidden from our view by the broad leaves of the banana trees, which grew in great luxuriance in that part. Jack was just preparing to force his way through this thicket, when we were startled and arrested by a strange pattering or rumbling sound which appeared to us quite different from any of the sounds we had heard during the previous part of our walk.

"Hallo!" cried Peterkin, stopping short and grasping his club with both hands, "what's that?"

Neither of us replied; but Jack seized his axe in his right hand, while with the other he pushed aside the broad leaves and endeavoured to peer amongst them.

"I can see nothing," he said, after a short pause. "I think it—"

Again the rumbling sound came, louder than before, and we all sprang back and stood on the defensive. For myself, having forgotten my club, and not having taken the precaution to cut another, I buttoned my jacket, doubled my fists, and threw myself into a boxing attitude. I must say, however, that I felt somewhat uneasy; and my companions afterwards confessed that their thoughts at this moment had been instantly filled with all they had ever heard or read of wild beasts and savages, torturings at the stake, roastings alive, and such like horrible things. Suddenly the pattering noise increased with tenfold violence. It was followed by a fearful crash among the bushes, which was rapidly repeated, as if some gigantic

animal were bounding towards us. In another moment an enormous rock came crashing through the shrubbery, followed by a cloud of dust and small stones, and flew close past the spot where we stood, carrying bushes and young trees along with it.

"Pooh! is that all?" exclaimed Peterkin, wiping the perspiration off his forehead. "Why, I thought it was all the wild men and beasts in the South Sea Islands galloping on in one grand charge to sweep us off the face of the earth, instead of a mere stone tumbling down the mountain side."

"Nevertheless," remarked Jack, "if that same stone had hit any of us, it would have rendered the charge you speak of quite unnecessary, Peterkin."

This was true, and I felt very thankful for our escape. On examining the spot more narrowly, we found that it lay close to the foot of a very rugged precipice, from which stones of various sizes were always tumbling at intervals. Indeed the numerous fragments lying scattered all around might have suggested the cause of the sound, had we not been too suddenly alarmed to think of anything.

We now resumed our journey, resolving that in our future excursions into the interior, we would be careful to avoid this dangerous precipice.

Soon afterwards we arrived at the foot of the hill, and prepared to ascend it. Here Jack made a discovery which caused us all very great joy. This was a tree of a remarkably beautiful appearance, which Jack confidently declared to be the celebrated bread-fruit tree.

"Is it celebrated?" inquired Peterkin, with a look of great simplicity.

"It is," replied Jack.

"That's odd, now," rejoined Peterkin; "I never heard of it before."

"Then it's not so celebrated as I thought it was," returned Jack, quietly squeezing Peterkin's hat over his eyes; "but listen, you ignorant boobie! and hear of it now."

Peterkin readjusted his hat, and was soon listening with as much interest as myself, while Jack told us that this tree is one of the most valuable in the islands of the south; that it bears two, sometimes three, crops of fruit in the year; that the fruit is very like wheaten bread in appearance, and that it constitutes the principal food of many of the islanders.

"So," said Peterkin, "we seem to have everything ready prepared to our hands in this wonderful island—lemonade ready bottled in nuts, and loaf-bread growing on the trees!"

Peterkin, as usual, was jesting; nevertheless it is a curious fact that he spoke almost the literal truth.

"Moreover," continued Jack, "the bread-fruit tree affords a capital gum, which serves the natives for pitching their canoes; the bark of the young branches is made by them into cloth; and of the wood, which is durable and of a good colour, they build their houses. So you see, lads, that we have no lack of material here to make us comfortable, if we are only clever enough to use it."

"But are you sure that that's it?" asked Peterkin.

"Quite sure," replied Jack; "for I was particularly interested in the account I once read of it, and I remember the description well, I am sorry, however, that I have forgotten the descriptions of many other trees which I am sure we have seen to-day, if we could but

recognise them. So you see, Peterkin, I'm not up to everything yet."

"Never mind, Jack," said Peterkin, with a grave, patronising expression of countenance, patting his tall companion on the shoulder—"never mind, Jack; you know a good deal for your age. You're a clever boy, sir—a promising young man; and if you only go on as you have begun, sir, you will—"

The end of this speech was suddenly cut short by Jack tripping up Peterkin's heels and tumbling him into a mass of thick shrubs, where, finding himself comfortable, he lay still, basking in the sunshine, while Jack and I examined the bread-fruit tree.

We were much struck with the deep, rich green colour of its broad leaves, which were twelve to eighteen inches long, deeply indented, and of a glossy smoothness like the laurel. The fruit, with which it was loaded, was nearly round and appeared to be about six inches in diameter, with a rough rind, marked with lozenge-shaped divisions. It was of various colours, from light pea-green to brown and rich yellow. Jack said that the yellow was the ripe fruit. We afterwards found that most of the fruit-trees on the island were evergreens, and that we might, when we wished, pluck the blossom and the ripe fruit from the same tree. Such a wonderful difference from the trees of our own country surprised us not a little. The bark of the tree was rough and light-coloured; the trunk was about two feet in diameter, and it appeared to be twenty feet high, being quite destitute of branches up to that height, where it branched off into a beautiful and umbrageous head. We noticed that the fruit hung in clusters of twos and threes on the branches; but as we were anxious to get to the top of the hill, we refrained from attempting to pluck any at that time.

Our hearts were now very much cheered by our good fortune, and it was with light and active steps that we clambered up the steep sides of the hill. On reaching the summit, a new and if possible a grander prospect met our gaze. We found that this was not the highest part of the island, but that another hill lay beyond, with a wide valley between it and the one on which we stood. This valley like the first, was also full of rich trees, some dark and some light green, some heavy and thick in foliage, and others light, feathery, and graceful, while the beautiful blossoms on many of them threw a sort of rainbow tint over all, and gave to the valley the appearance of a garden of flowers. Among these we recognised many of the bread-fruit trees, laden with yellow fruit, and also a great many cocoa-nut palms. After gazing our fill we pushed down the hillside, crossed the valley and soon began to ascend the second mountain. It was clothed with trees nearly to the top, but the summit was bare, and in some places broken.

While on our way up we came to an object which filled us with much interest. This was the stump of a tree that had evidently been cut down with an axe! So, then, we were not the first who had viewed this beautiful isle. The hand of man had been at work there before us. It now began to recur to us again that perhaps the island was inhabited, although we had not seen any trace of man until now; but a second glance at the stump convinced us that we had not more reason to think so now than formerly, for the surface of the wood was quite decayed, and partly covered with fungus and green matter, so that it must have been cut many years ago.

"Perhaps," said Peterkin, "some ship or other has touched here long ago for wood, and only taken one tree."

We did not think this likely, however, because, in such circumstances, the crew of a ship would cut wood of small size, and near the shore, whereas this was a large tree and stood near the top of the mountain. In fact, it was the highest large tree on the mountain, all above it being wood of very recent growth.

"I can't understand it," said Jack, scratching the surface of the stump with his axe. "I can only suppose that the savages have been here and cut it for some purpose known only to themselves. But, hullo ! what have we here ?"

As he spoke, Jack began carefully to scrape away the moss and fungus from the stump, and soon laid bare three distinct traces of marks, as if some inscription or initials had been cut thereon. But although the traces were distinct, beyond all doubt, the exact form of the letters could not be made out. Jack thought they looked like J. S., but we could not be certain. They had apparently been carelessly cut, and long exposure to the weather had so broken them up that we could not make out what they were. We were exceedingly perplexed at this discovery, and stayed a long time at the place conjecturing what these marks could have been, but without avail ; so, as the day was advancing, we left it and quickly reached the top of the mountain.

We found this to be the highest point of the island, and from it we saw our kingdom lying, as it were, like a map around us. As I have always thought it impossible to get a thing properly into one's understanding without comprehending it, I shall beg the reader's patience for a little while I describe our island, thus, shortly :—

It consisted of two mountains : the one we guessed at 500 feet ; the other, on which we stood, at 1,000. Between these lay a rich beautiful valley, as already said. This valley crossed the island from one end to the other, being high in the middle and sloping on each side towards the sea. The large mountain sloped, on the side farthest from where we had been wrecked, gradually towards the sea ; but although, when viewed at a glance, it had thus a regular sloping appearance, a more careful observation showed that it was broken up into a multitude of very small vales, or rather dells and glens, intermingled with little rugged spots and small but abrupt precipices here and there, with rivulets tumbling over their edges and wandering down the slopes in little white streams, sometimes glistening among the broad leaves of the bread-fruit and cocoa-nut trees, or hiding altogether beneath the rich underwood. At the base of this mountain lay a narrow bright green plain or meadow, which terminated abruptly at the shore. On the other side of the island, whence we had come, stood the smaller hill, at the foot of which diverged three valleys ; one being that which we had ascended, with a smaller vale on each side of it, and separated from it by the two ridges before mentioned. In these smaller valleys there were no streams, but they were clothed with the same luxuriant vegetation.

The diameter of the island seemed to be about ten miles, and as it was almost circular in form, its circumference must have been thirty miles—perhaps a little more, if allowance be made for the numerous bays and indentations of the shore. The entire island was belted by a beach of pure white sand, on which laved the gentle ripples of

the lagoon. We now also observed that the coral reef completely encircled the island; but it varied its distance from it here and there, in some places being a mile from the beach, in others a few hundred yards, but the average distance was half-a-mile. The reef lay very low, and the spray of the surf broke quite over it in many places. This surf never ceased its roar, for however calm the weather might be, there is always a gentle swaying motion in the great Pacific, which, although scarce noticeable out at sea, reaches the shore at last in a huge billow. The water within the lagoon, as before said, was perfectly still. There were three narrow openings in the reef: one opposite each end of the valley which I have described as crossing the island; the other opposite our own valley, which we afterwards named the Valley of the Wreck. At each of these openings the reef rose into two small green islets, covered with bushes and having one or two cocoa nut palms on each. These islets were very singular, and appeared as if planted expressly for the purpose of marking the channel into the lagoon. Our captain was making for one of these openings the day we were wrecked, and would have reached it too, I doubt not, had not the rudder been torn away. Within the lagoon were several pretty, low coral islands, just opposite our encampment; and immediately beyond these, out at sea, lay about a dozen other islands, at various distances, from half-a-mile to ten miles; all of them, as far as we could discern, smaller than ours and apparently uninhabited. They seemed to be low coral islands, raised but little above the sea, yet covered with cocoa-nut trees.

All this we noted, and a great deal more, while we sat on the top of the mountain. After we had satisfied ourselves we prepared to return; but here again we discovered traces of the presence of man. These were a pole or staff and one or two pieces of wood which had been squared with an axe. All of these were, however, very much decayed, and they had evidently not been touched for many years.

Full of these discoveries we returned to our encampment. On the way we fell in with the traces of some four-footed animal, but whether old or of recent date none of us were able to guess. This also tended to raise our hopes of obtaining some animal food on the island, so we reached home in good spirits, quite prepared for supper, and highly satisfied with our excursion.

After much discussion, in which Peterkin took the lead, we came to the conclusion that the Island was uninhabited, and went to bed.

CHAPTER VII.

Jack's ingenuity—We get into difficulties about fishing, and get out of them by a method which gives us a cold bath—Horrible encounter with a shark.

For several days, after the excursion related in the last chapter we did not wander far from our encampment, but gave ourselves up to forming plans for the future and making our present abode comfortable.

There were various causes that induced this state of comparative inaction. In the first place, although everything around us was so delightful, and we could without difficulty obtain all that we required for our bodily comfort, we did not quite like the idea of settling down here for the rest of our lives, far away from our friends and our

native land. To set energetically about preparations for a permanent residence seemed so like making up our minds to saying adieu to home and friends for ever, that we tacitly shrank from it, and put off our preparations, for one reason and another, as long as we could. Then there was a little uncertainty still as to their being natives on the island, and we entertained a kind of faint hope that a ship might come and take us off. But as day after day passed, and neither savages nor ships appeared, we gave up all hope of an early deliverance, and set diligently to work at our homestead.

During this time, however, we had not been altogether idle. We made several experiments in cooking the cocoa-nut, most of which did not improve it. Then we removed our goods, and took up our abode in the cave, but found the change so bad that we returned gladly to the bower. Besides this, we bathed very frequently, and talked a great deal; at least Jack and Peterkin did,—I listened. Among other useful things, Jack, who was ever the most active and diligent, converted about three inches of the hoop-iron into an excellent knife. First he beat it quite flat with the axe. Then he made a rude handle, and tied the hoop iron to it with our piece of whip-cord, and ground it to an edge on a piece of sandstone. When it was finished he used it to shape a better handle, to which he fixed it with a strip of his cotton handkerchief—in which operation he had as Peterkin pointed out, torn off one of Lord Nelson's noses. However, the whip-cord thus set free, was used by Peterkin as a fishing-line. He merely tied a piece of oyster to the end of it. This the fish were allowed to swallow, and then they were pulled quickly ashore. But as the line was very short and we had no boat, the fish we caught were exceedingly small.

One day Peterkin came up from the beach, where he had been angling, and said in a very cross tone, "I'll tell you what, Jack, I'm not going to be humbugged with catching such contemptible things any longer. I want you to swim out with me on your back, and let me fish in deep water!"

"Dear me, Peterkin!" replied Jack, "I had no idea you were taking the thing so much to heart, else I would have got you out of that difficulty long ago. Let me see,"—and Jack looked down at a piece of timber on which he had been labouring, with a peculiar gaze of abstraction, which he always assumed when trying to invent or discover anything.

"What say you to building a boat?" he enquired, looking up hastily.

"Take far too long," was the reply; "can't be bothered waiting. I want to begin at once!"

Again Jack considered. "I have it!" he cried. "We'll fell a large tree and launch the trunk of it in the water, so that when you want to fish you've nothing to do but to swim out to it."

"Would not a small raft do better?" said I.

"Much better; but we have no ropes to bind it together with. Perhaps we may find something hereafter that will do as well, but in the meantime let us try the tree."

This was agreed on, so we started off to a spot not far distant, where we knew of a tree that would suit us, which grew near the water's edge. As soon as we reached it Jack threw off his coat, and, wielding the axe with his sturdy arms, hacked and hewed at it for a quarter of an hour without stopping. Then he paused, and while he sat down

to rest I continued the work. Then Peterkin made a vigorous attack on it, so that when Jack renewed his powerful blows, a few minutes' cutting brought it down with a terrible crash.

"Hurrah! now for it," cried Jack; "let us off with its head."

So saying he began to cut through the stem again, at about six yards from the thick end. This done, he cut three strong, short poles or levers from the stout branches, with which to roll the log down the beach into the sea; for, as it was nearly two feet thick at the large end, we could not move it without such helps. With the levers, however, we rolled it slowly into the sea.

Having been thus successful in launching our vessel, we next shaped the levers into rude oars or paddles, and then attempted to embark. This was easy enough to do; but after seating ourselves astride the log, it was with the utmost difficulty we kept it from rolling round and plunging us into the water. Not that we minded that much; but we preferred, if possible, to fish in dry clothes. To be sure, our trousers were necessarily wet, as our legs were dangling in the water on each side of the log; but as they could be easily dried we did not care. After half-an-hour's practice, we became expert enough to keep our balance pretty steadily. Then Peterkin laid down his paddle, and having baited his line with a whole oyster, dropped it into deep water.

"Now then, Jack," said he, "be cautious; steer clear o' that seaweed. There! that's it's; gently now, gently. I see a fellow at least a foot long down there, coming to—ha! that's it! Oh bother he's off."

"Did he bite?" said Jack, urging the log onwards a little with his paddle.

"Bite? ay! He took it into his mouth, but the moment I began to haul he opened his jaws and let it out again."

"Let him swallow it next time," said Jack, laughing at the melancholy expression of Peterkin's visage.

"There he's again," cried Peterkin, his eyes flashing with excitement. "Look out! Now then! No! Yes! No! Why, the brute won't swallow it!"

"Try to haul him up by the mouth, then," cried Jack. "Do it gently."

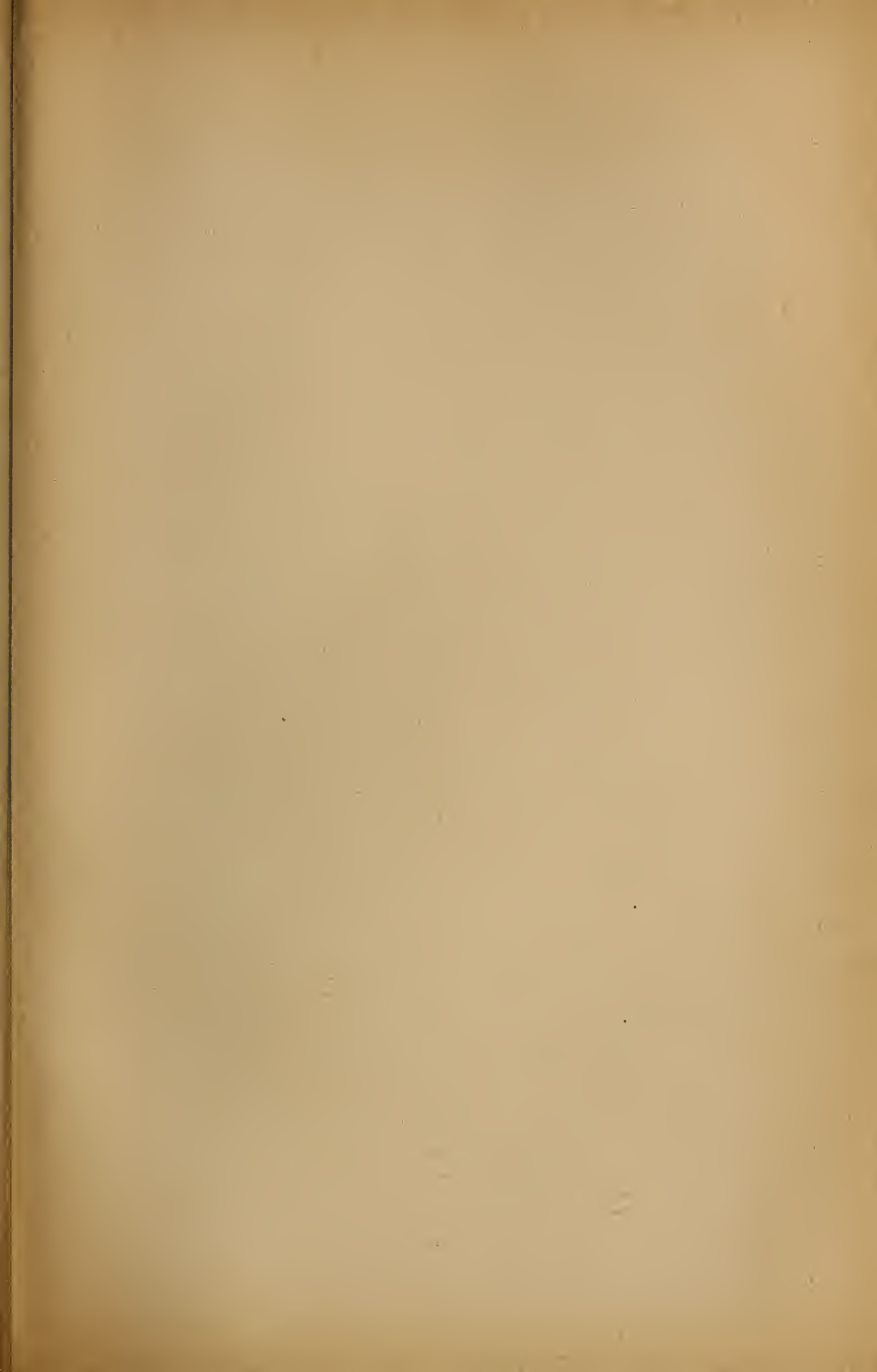
A heavy sigh and a look of blank despair showed that poor Peterkin had tried and failed again.

"Never mind, lad," said Jack, in a voice of sympathy; "we'll move on, and offer it to some other fish." So saying, Jack plied his paddle; but scarcely had he moved from the spot, when a fish with an enormous head and a little body darted from under a rock and swallowed the bait at once.

"Got him this time—that's a fact!" cried Peterkin, hauling in the line. "He's swallowed the bait right down to his tail, I declare. Oh what a thumper!"

As the fish came struggling to the surface, we leaned forward to see it, and overbalanced the log. Peterkin threw his arms round the fish's neck, and in another instant we were all floundering in the water!

A shout of laughter burst from us as we rose to the surface like three drowned rats, and seized hold of the log. We soon recovered our position, and sat more warily, while Peterkin secured the fish,





A Dreadful Adventure.

which had well-nigh escaped in the midst of our struggles. It was little worth having, however; but, as Peterkin remarked, it was better than the smouts he had been catching for the last two or three days; so we laid it on the log before us, and having re-baited the line, dropped it in again for another.

Now, while we were thus intent upon our sport, our attention was suddenly attracted by a ripple on the sea, just a few yards away from us. Peterkin shouted to us to paddle in that direction, as he thought it was a big fish, and we might have a chance of catching it. But Jack, instead of complying, said, in a deep, earnest tone of voice, which I never before heard him use,—

"Haul up your line, Peterkin; seize your paddle; quick,—it's a shark!"

The horror with which we heard this may well be imagined, for it must be remembered that our legs were hanging down in the water, and we could not venture to pull them up without upsetting the log. Peterkin instantly hauled up the line, and grasping his paddle, exerted himself to the utmost, while we also did our best to make for shore. But we were a good way off, and the log being, as I have before said, very heavy, moved but slowly through the water. We now saw the shark quite distinctly swimming round and round us, its sharp fin every now and then protruding above the water. From its active and unsteady motions, Jack knew it was making up his mind to attack us, so he urged us vehemently to paddle for our lives, while he himself set us the example. Suddenly he shouted, "Look out! there he comes!" and in a second we saw the monstrous fish dive close under us, and turn half over on his side. But we all made a great commotion with our paddles, which no doubt frightened it away for that time, as we saw it immediately after circling round us as before.

"Throw the fish to him," cried Jack, in a quick, suppressed voice; "we'll make the shore in time yet if we can keep him off for a few minutes."

Peterkin stopped one instant to obey the command, and then plied his paddle again with all his might. No sooner had the fish fallen on the water than we observed the shark to sink. In another second we saw its white breast rising; for sharks always turn over on their sides when about to seize their prey, their mouths being not at the point of their heads like those of other fish, but, as it were, under their chins. In another moment his snout rose above the water; his wide jaws, armed with a terrific double row of teeth, appeared. The dead fish was engulfed, and the shark sank out of sight. But Jack was mistaken in supposing that it would be satisfied. In a very few minutes it returned to us, and its quick motions led us to fear that it would attack us at once.

"Stop paddling," cried Jack, suddenly. "I see it coming up behind us. Now, obey my orders *quickly*. Our lives may depend on it. Ralph, Peterkin, do your best to *balance the log*. Don't look out for the shark. Don't glance behind you. Do nothing but balance the log."

Peterkin and I instantly did as we were ordered, being only too glad to do anything that afforded us a chance or a hope of escape, for we had implicit confidence in Jack's courage and wisdom. For a few seconds, that seemed long minutes to my mind we sat thus

silently ; but I could not resist glancing backward, despite the orders to the contrary. On doing so, I saw Jack sitting rigid like a statue, with his paddle raised, his lips compressed, and his eyebrows bent over his eyes, which glared savagely from beneath them down into the water. I also saw the shark, to my horror, quite close under the log, in the act of darting towards Jack's foot. I could scarce suppress a cry on beholding this. In another moment the shark rose. Jack drew his leg suddenly from the water, and threw it over the log. The monster's snout rubbed against the log as it passed, and revealed its hideous jaws, into which Jack instantly plunged the paddle, and thrust it down its throat. So violent was this act that Jack rose to his feet in performing it ; the log was thereby rolled completely over, and we were once more plunged into the water. We all rose, spluttering and gasping, in a moment.

"Now, then, strike out for shore," cried Jack.—"Here, Peterkin, catch hold of my collar, and kick out with a will."

Peterkin did as he was desired, and Jack struck out with such force that he cut through the water like a boat ; while I, being free from all encumbrance, succeeded in keeping up with him. As we had by this time drawn pretty near to the shore, a few minutes more sufficed to carry us into shallow water ; and, finally, we landed in safety, though very much exhausted, and not a little frightened by our terrible adventure.

CHAPTER VIII.

The beauties of the bottom of the sea tempt Peterkin to dive—How he did it—More difficulties overcome—The Water Garden—Curious creatures of the sea—The tank—Candles missed very much, and the candle-nut tree discovered—Wonderful account of Peterkin's first voyage—Cloth found growing on a tree—A plan projected, and arms prepared for offence and defence—A dreadful cry.

OUR encounter with the shark was the first great danger that had befallen us since landing on this island, and we felt very seriously affected by it, especially when we considered that we had so often unwittingly incurred the same danger before while bathing. We were now forced to take to fishing again in the shallow water, until we should succeed in constructing a raft. What troubled us most, however, was, that we were compelled to forego our morning swimming excursions. We did, indeed, continue to enjoy our bathe in the shallow water, but Jack and I found that one great source of our enjoyment was gone, when we could no longer dive down among the beautiful coral groves at the bottom of the lagoon. We had come to be so fond of this exercise, and to take such an interest in watching the formations of coral and the gambols of the many beautiful fish amongst the forests of red and green sea-weeds, that we had become quite familiar with the appearance of the fish and the localities that they chiefly haunted. We had also become expert divers. But we made it a rule never to stay long under water at a time. Jack told me that to do so often was bad for the lungs, and, instead of affording us enjoyment, would ere long do us a serious injury. So we never stayed at the bottom as long as we might have done, but came up frequently to the top for fresh air, and dived down again immediately. Sometimes, when Jack happened to be in a humorous frame, he

would seat himself at the bottom of the sea on one of the brain-corals, as if he were seated on a large paddock-stool, and then make faces at me, in order, if possible, to make me laugh under water. At first, when he took me unawares, he nearly succeeded, and I had to shoot to the surface in order to laugh; but afterwards I became aware of his intentions, and being naturally of a grave disposition, I had no difficulty in restraining myself. I used often to wonder how poor Peterkin would have liked to be with us; and he sometimes expressed much regret at being unable to join us. I used to do my best to gratify him, poor fellow, by relating all the wonders that we saw; but this, instead of satisfying, seemed only to whet his curiosity the more, so one day we prevailed on him to try to go down with us. But although a brave boy in every other way, Peterkin was very nervous in the water, and it was with difficulty we got him to consent to be taken down, for he could never have managed to push himself down to the bottom without assistance. But no sooner had we pulled him down a yard or so into the deep clear water, than he began to struggle and kick violently; so we were forced to let him go, when he rose out of the water like a cork, gave a loud gasp and a frightful roar, and struck out for the land with the utmost possible haste.

Now all this pleasure we were to forego, and when we thought thereon, Jack and I felt very much depressed in our spirits. I could see, also, that Peterkin grieved and sympathized with us, for when talking about this matter he refrained from jesting and bantering us upon it.

As, however, a man's difficulties usually set him upon devising methods to overcome them, whereby he often discovers better things than those he may have lost, so this our difficulty induced us to think of searching for a large pool among the rocks, where the water should be deep enough for diving, yet so surrounded by rocks as to prevent sharks from getting at us. And such a pool we afterwards found, which proved to be very much better than our most sanguine hopes anticipated. It was situated not more than ten minutes' walk from our camp, and was in the form of a small deep bay or basin, the entrance to which, besides being narrow, was so shallow that no fish so large as a shark could get in, at least not unless he should be a remarkably thin one.

Inside of this basin, which we called our Water Garden, the coral formations were much more wonderful, and the sea-weed plants far more lovely and vividly coloured, than in the lagoon itself. And the water was so clear and still, that, although very deep, you could see the minutest object at the bottom. Besides this, there was a ledge of rock which overhung the basin at its deepest part, from which we could dive pleasantly, and whereon Peterkin could sit and see not only all the wonders I had described to him, but also see Jack and me creeping amongst the marine shrubbery at the bottom, like—as he expressed it—"two great white sea-monsters." During these excursions of ours to the bottom of the sea, we began to get an insight into the manners and customs of its inhabitants, and to make discoveries of wonderful things, the like of which we never before conceived. Among other things, we were deeply interested with the operations of the little coral insect which, I was informed by Jack, is supposed to have entirely constructed many of the numerous

islands in the Pacific Ocean. And certainly, when we considered the great reef which these insects had formed round the island on which we were cast, and observed their ceaseless activity in building their myriad cells, it did at first seem as if this might be true; but then, again, when I looked at the mountains of the island, and reflected that there were thousands of such, many of them much higher, in the South Seas, I doubted that there must be some mistake here. But more of this hereafter.

I also became much taken up with the manners and appearance of the anemones, and star-fish, and crabs, and sea-urchins, and such-like creatures; and was not content with watching those I saw during my dives in the Water Garden, but I must needs scoop out a hole in the coral rock close to it, which I filled with salt water, and stocked with sundry specimens of anemones and shell fish, in order to watch more closely how they were in the habit of passing their time. Our burning-glass also now became a great treasure to me, as it enabled me to magnify, and so to perceive more clearly the forms and actions of these curious creatures of the deep.

Having now got ourselves into a very comfortable condition, we began to talk of a project which we had long had in contemplation—namely, to travel entirely round the island; in order, first, to ascertain whether it contained any other productions which might be useful to us; and second, to see whether there might be any place more convenient and suitable for our permanent residence than that on which we were now encamped. Not that we were in any degree dissatisfied with it; on the contrary, we entertained quite a home-feeling to our bower and its neighbourhood; but if a better place did exist, there was no reason why we should not make use of it. At any rate, it would be well to know of its existence.

We had much earnest talk over this matter. But Jack proposed that, before undertaking such an excursion, we should supply ourselves with good defensive arms; for as we intended not only to go round all the shore, but to ascend most of the valleys, before returning home, we should be likely to meet in with, he would not say *dangers*, but at least with everything that existed on the island, whatever that might be.

"Besides," said Jack, "it won't do for us to live on cocoa-nuts and oysters always. No doubt they are very excellent in their way, but I think a little animal food now and then would be agreeable as well as good for us; and as there are many small birds among the trees, some of which are probably very good to eat, I think it would be a capital plan to make bows and arrows, with which we could easily knock them over."

"First-rate!" cried Peterkin. "You will make the bows, Jack, and I'll try my hand at the arrows. The fact is, I'm quite tired of throwing stones at the birds. I began the very day we landed, I think, and have persevered up to the present time, but I've never hit anything yet."

"You forgot," said I, "you hit me one day on the shin."

"Ah, true," replied Peterkin, and a precious shindy you kicked up in consequence. But you were at least four yards away from the impudent paraquet I aimed at; so you see what a horribly bad shot I am."

"But," said I, "Jack, you cannot make three bows and arrows be-

fore it to-morrow, and would it not be a pity to waste time, now that we have made up our minds to go on this expedition? Suppose that you make one bow and arrow for yourself, and we can take our clubs?"

"That's true, Ralph. The day is pretty far advanced, and I doubt if I can make even one bow before dark. To be sure, I might work by fire-light, after the sun goes down."

We had, up to this time, been in the habit of going to bed with the sun, as we had no pressing call to work o' nights; and, indeed, our work during the day was usually hard enough—what between fishing, and improving our bower, and diving in the Water Garden, and rambling in the woods; so that, when night came, we were usually very glad to retire to our beds. But now that we had a desire to work at night, we felt a wish for candles.

"Won't a good blazing fire give you light enough?" inquired Peterkin.

"Yes," replied Jack, "quite enough; but then it will give us a great deal more than enough of heat in this warm climate of ours."

"True," said Peterkin; "I forgot that. It would roast us."

"Well, as you're always doing that at any rate," remarked Jack, "we could scarcely call it a change. But the fact is, I've been thinking over this subject before. There is a certain nut growing in these islands which is called the candle-nut, because the natives use it instead of candles, and I know all about it, and how to prepare it for burning—"

"Then why don't you do it?" interrupted Peterkin. "Why have you kept us in the dark so long, you vile philosopher?"

"Because," said Jack, "I have not seen the tree yet, and I'm not sure that I should know either the tree or the nuts if I did see them. You see, I forget the description."

"Ah! that's just the way with me," said Peterkin with a deep sigh. "I never could keep in my mind for half-an-hour the few descriptions I ever attempted to remember. The very first voyage I ever made was caused by my mistaking a description or forgetting it, which is the same thing. And a horrible voyage it was. I had to fight with the captain the whole way out, and make the homeward voyage by swimming!"

"Come, Peterkin," said I, "you can't get even *me* to believe that."

"Perhaps not, but it's true notwithstanding," returned Peterkin, pretending to be hurt at my doubting his word.

"Let us hear how it happened," said Jack, while a good-natured smile over-spread his face.

"Well, you must know," began Peterkin, "that the very day before I went to sea, I was greatly taken up with a game at hockey, which I was playing with my old school-fellows for the last time before leaving them. You see I was young then, Ralph," Peterkin gazed, in an abstracted and melancholy manner out to sea.—"Well, in the midst of the game, my uncle, who had taken all the bother and trouble of getting me bound 'prentice and rigged out, came and took me aside, and told me that he was called suddenly away from home, and would not be able to see me aboard, as he had intended. 'However,' said he, 'the captain knows you are coming, so that's not of much consequence; but as you'll have to find the ship yourself, you must remember her name and description. D'ye hear, boy?' I certainly did hear. but I'm afraid I did not understand, for my mind was so

taken up with the game, which I saw my side was losing, that I began to grow impatient, and the moment my uncle finished his description of the ship, and bade me good-bye, I bolted back to my game, with only a confused idea of three masts, and a green-painted tafferel, and a gilt figure-head of Hercules with his club at the bow. Next day I was so much cast down with everybody saying good-bye, and a lot o' my female friends cryin' horribly over me, that I did not start for the harbour, where the ship was lying among a thousand others, till it was almost too late. So I had to run the whole way. When I reached the pier, there were so many masts, and so much confusion, that I felt quite humbled in my faculties. 'Now,' said I to myself, 'Peterkin, you're in a fix.' Then I fancied I saw a gilt figure-head and three masts, belonging to a ship just ready to start; so I darted on board, but speedily jumped on shore again, when I found that two of the masts belonged to another vessel, and the figure-head to a third! At last I caught sight of what I made sure was it—a fine large vessel just casting off her moorings. The tafferel was green. Three masts—yes, that must be it—and the gilt figure-head of Hercules. To be sure, it had a three-pronged pitch-fork in its hand instead of a club; but that might be my uncle's mistake, or perhaps Hercules sometimes varied his weapons. 'Cast off!' roared a voice from the quarer-deck. 'Hold on!' cried I, rushing frantically through the crowd. 'Hold on! hold on!' repeated some of the bystanders, while the men at the ropes delayed for a minute. This threw the captain into a frightful rage; for some of his friends had come down to see him off, and having his orders contradicted so flatly was too much for him. However, the delay was sufficient. I took a race and a good leap; the ropes were cast off; the steam-tug gave a puff, and we started. Suddenly the captain walks up to me: "where did you come from, you scamp, and what do you want here?"

"Please, sir," said I, touching my cap, 'I'm your new 'prentice come aboard.'

"New 'prentice!" said he, stamping; 'I've got no new 'prentice. My boys are all aboard already. This is a trick, you young black-guard. You've run away, you have;' and the captain stamped about the deck and swore dreadfully; for, you see, the thought of having to stop the ship and lower a boat and lose half-an-hour, all for the sake of sending a small boy ashore, seemed to make him very angry. Besides, it was blowin' fresh outside the harbour, so that to have let the steamer alongside to put me into it was no easy job. Just as we were passing the pierhead, where several boats were rowing into the harbour, the captain came up to me.

"You've run away, you blackguard," he said, giving me a box on the ear.

"No I haven't," said I, angrily; for the box was by no means a light one.

"Hark'ee, boy, can you swim?"

"Yes," said I.

"Then do it," and seizing me by my trousers and the nape of my neck, he tossed me over the side into the sea. The fellows in the boats at end of the pier backed their oars on seeing this; but observing that I could swim, they allowed me to make the best of my way to the pier-head.—So you see, Ralph, that I really did swim my first homeward voyage."

Jack laughed, and patted Peterkin on the shoulder.

"But tell us about the candle-nut tree," said I; "you were talking about it."

"Very true," said Jack, "but I fear I can remember little about it. I believe the nut is about the size of a walnut; and I think that the leaves are white, but I am not sure."

"Eh! ha! hum!" exclaimed Peterkin, "I saw a tree answering to that description this very day."

"Did you?" cried Jack. "Is it far from this?"

"No, not half-a-mile."

"Then lead me to it," said Jack, seizing his axe.

In a few minutes we were all three pushing through the underwood of the forest, headed by Peterkin.

We soon came to the tree in question, which, after Jack had closely examined it, we concluded must be the candle-nut tree. Its leaves were of a beautiful silvery white, and formed a fine contrast to the dark-green foliage of the surrounding trees. We immediately filled our pockets with the nuts, after which Jack said,—

"Now, Peterkin, climb that cocoa nut tree and cut me one of the long branches."

This was soon done, but it cost some trouble, for the stem was very high, and as Peterkin usually pulled nuts from the younger trees, he was not much accustomed to climbing the high ones. The leaf or branch was a very large one, and we were surprised at its size and strength. Viewed from a little distance, the cocoa nut tree seems to be a tall, straight stem, without a single branch except at the top, where there is a tuft of feathery-looking leaves, that seem to wave like soft plumes in the wind. But when we saw one of these leaves or branches at our feet, we found it to be a strong stalk, about fifteen feet long, with a number of narrow, pointed leaflets, ranged alternately on each side. But what seemed to us the most wonderful thing about it was a curious substance resembling cloth, which was wrapped round the thick end of the stalk, where it had been cut from the tree. Peterkin told us that he had the greatest difficulty in separating the branch from the stem on account of this substance, as it was wrapped quite round the tree, and, he observed, round all the other branches, thus forming a strong support to the large leaves while exposed to high winds. When I call this substance cloth I do not exaggerate. Indeed, with regard to all the things I saw during my eventful career in the South Seas, I have been exceedingly careful not to exaggerate, or in any way to mislead or deceive my readers. This cloth, I say, was remarkably like to coarse brown cotton cloth. It had a seam or fibre down the centre of it, from which diverged other fibres, about the size of a bristle. There were two layers of these fibres, very long and tough, the one layer crossing the other obliquely, and the whole was cemented together with a still finer fibrous and adhesive substance. When we regarded it attentively, we could with difficulty believe that it had not been woven by human hands. This remarkable piece of cloth we stripped carefully off, and found it to be above two feet long by a foot broad, and we carried it home with us as a great prize.

Jack now took one of the leaflets, and, cutting out the central spine or stalk, hurried back with it to our camp. Having made a small fire, he baked the nuts slightly, and then peeled off the husks. After this

he wished to bore a hole in them, which, not having anything better at hand at the time, he did with the point of our useless pencil-case. Then he strung them on the cocoa nut spine, and on putting a light to the topmost nut, we found to our joy that it burned with a clear, beautiful flame; upon seeing which, Peterkin sprang up and danced round the fire for at least five minutes in the excess of his satisfaction.

"Now lads," said Jack, extinguishing our candle, "the sun will set in an hour, so we have no time to lose. I shall go and cut a young tree to make my bow out of, and you had better each of you go and select good strong sticks for clubs, and we'll set to work at them after dark."

So saying he shouldered his axe and went off, followed by Peterkin, while I took up the piece of newly-discovered cloth, and fell to examining its structure. So engrossed was I in this that I was still sitting in the same attitude and occupation when my companions returned.

"I told you so!" cried Peterkin, with a loud laugh.—"O Ralph, you're incorrigible. See, there's a club for you. I was sure, when we left you looking at that bit of stuff, that we would find you poring over it when we came back, so I just cut a club for you as well as for myself."

"Thank you, Peterkin," said I. "It was kind of you to do that, instead of scolding me for a lazy fellow, as I confess I deserve."

"Oh, as to that," returned Peterkin, "I'll blow you up yet, if you wish it; only it would be of no use if I did, for you're a perfect mule!"

As it was now getting dark we lighted our candle, and placing it in a holder made of two crossing branches, inside of our bower, we seated ourselves on our leafy beds and began to work.

"I intend to appropriate the bow for my own use," said Jack, chipping the piece of wood he had brought with his axe. "I used to be a pretty fair shot once. But what's that you're doing?" he added, looking at Peterkin, who had drawn the end of a long pole into the tent, and was endeavouring to fit a small piece of the hoop-iron to the end of it.

"I'm going to enlist into the Lancers," answered Peterkin. "You see, Jack, I find the club rather an unwieldy instrument for my delicately-formed muscles, and I flatter myself I shall do more execution with a spear."

"Well, if length constitutes power," said Jack, "you'll certainly be invincible."

The pole which Peterkin had cut was full twelve feet long, being a very strong but light and tough young tree, which merely required thinning at the butt to be a serviceable weapon.

"That's a very good idea," said I.

"Which—this?" inquired Peterkin, pointing to the spear.

"Yes," I replied.

"Humph!" said he; "you'd find it a pretty tough and matter-of-fact idea if you had it stuck through your gizzard, old boy!"

"I mean the idea of making it is a good one," said I, laughing. "And, now I think of it, I'll change my plan too. I don't think much of a club, so I'll make me a sling out of this piece of cloth. I used to be very fond of slinging, ever since I read of David slaying Goliath the Philistine, and I was thought to be expert at it."

So I set to work to manufacture a sling. For a long time we all worked very busily without speaking. At length Peterkin looked up. "I say, Jack, I'm sorry to say I must apply to you for another strip of your handkerchief, to tie on this rascally head with. It's pretty well torn at any rate, so you won't miss it."

Jack proceeded to comply with this request, when Peterkin suddenly laid his hand on his arm and arrested him.

"Hist, man," said he, "be tender; you should never be needlessly cruel if you can help it. Do try to shave past Lord Nelson's mouth without tearing it, if possible! Thanks. There are plenty more handkerchiefs on the cocoa nut trees."

Poor Peterkin! with what pleasant feelings I recall and record his jests and humorous sayings now!

While we were thus engaged, we were startled by a distant but most strange and horrible cry. It seemed to come from the sea, but was so far away that we could not distinguish its precise direction. Rushing out of our bower, we hastened down to the beach and stayed to listen. Again it came quite loud and distinct on the night air,—a prolonged, hideous cry, something like the braying of an ass. The moon had risen, and we could see the islands in and beyond the lagoon quite plainly, but there was no object visible to account for such a cry. A strong gust of wind was blowing from the point whence the sound came, but this died away while we were gazing out to sea.

"What can it be?" said Peterkin, in a low whisper, while we all involuntarily crept closer to each other.

"Do you know," said Jack, "I have heard that mysterious sound twice before, but never so loud as to-night. Indeed it was so faint that I thought I must have merely fancied it, so, as I did not wish to alarm you, I said nothing about it."

We listened for a long time for the sound again, but as it did not come, we returned to the bower and resumed our work.

"Very strange," said Peterkin, quite gravely. "Do you believe in ghosts, Ralph?"

"No," I answered, "I do not. Nevertheless I must confess that strange, unaccountable sounds, such as we have just heard, make me feel a little uneasy."

"What say you to it, Jack?"

"I neither believe in ghosts nor feel uneasy," he replied. "I never saw a ghost myself, and I never met with any one who had; and I have generally found that strange and unaccountable things have almost always been accounted for, and found to be quite simple, on close examination. I certainly can't imagine what that sound is; but I'm quite sure I shall find out before long, and if it's a ghost I'll—I'll—"

"Eat it," cried Peterkin.

"Yes, I'll eat it! Now, then, my bow and two arrows are finished; so if you're ready we had better turn in."

By this time Peterkin had thinned down his spear and tied an iron point very cleverly to the end of it; I had formed a sling, the lines of which were composed of thin strips of the cocoa nut cloth, plaited; and Jack had made a stout bow, nearly five feet long, with two arrows, feathered with two or three large plumes which some bird had dropped. They had no barbs, but Jack said that if arrows were

well feathered they did not require iron points, but would fly quite well if merely sharpened at the point ; which I did not know before.

"A feathered arrow without a barb," said he, "is a good weapon, but a barbed arrow without feathers is utterly useless."

The string of the bow was formed of our piece of whip-cord part of which, as he did not like to cut it, was rolled round the bow.

Although thus prepared for a start on the morrow, we thought it wise to exercise ourselves a little in the use of our weapons before starting, so we spent the whole of the next day in practising. And it was well we did so, for we found that our arms were very imperfect, and that we were far from perfect in the use of them. First, Jack found that the bow was much too strong, and he had to thin it. Also the spear was much too heavy, and so had to be reduced in thickness, although, nothing would induce Peterkin to have it shortened. My sling answered very well, but I had fallen so much out of practice that my first stone knocked off Peterkin's hat, and narrowly missed making a second Goliath of him. However, after having spent the whole day in diligent practice, we began to find some of our former expertness returning—at least Jack and I did. As for Peterkin, being naturally a neat-handed boy, he soon handled his spear well, and could run full tilt at a cocoa-nut, and hit it with great precision once out of every five times.

But I feel satisfied that we owed much of our rapid success to the unflagging energy of Jack, who insisted that, since we had made him captain, we should obey him ; and he kept us at work from morning till night, perseveringly, at the same thing. Peterkin wished very much to run about and stick his spear into everything he passed ; but Jack put up a cocoa-nut, and would not let him leave off running at that for a moment, except when he wanted to rest. We laughed at Jack for this, but we were both convinced that it did us much good.

That night we examined and repaired our arms ere we lay down to rest, although we were much fatigued, in order that we might be in readiness to set out on our expedition at daylight on the following morning.

CHAPTER IX.

Prepare for a journey round the island—Sagacious reflections—Mysterious appearances and startling occurrences.

SCARCELY had the sun shot its first ray across the bosom of the broad Pacific, when Jack sprang to his feet, and, hallooing in Peterkin's ear to awaken him, ran down the beach to take his customary dip in the sea. We did not, as was our wont, bathe that morning in our Water Garden, but, in order to save time, refreshed ourselves in the shallow water just opposite the bower. Our breakfast was also despatched without loss of time, and in less than an hour afterwards all our preparations for the journey were completed.

In addition to his ordinary dress, Jack tied a belt of cocoa-nut cloth round his waist, into which he thrust the axe. I was also advised to put on a belt and carry a short cudgel or bludgeon in it ; for, as Jack truly remarked, the sling would be of little use if we should chance to come to close quarters with any wild animal. As for Peterkin, notwithstanding that he carried such a long, and I must add,

frightful-looking spear over his shoulder, we could not prevail on him to leave his club behind ; "for," said he, "a spear at close quarters is not worth a button." I must say that it seemed to me that the club was, to use his own style of language, not worth a button-hold ; for it was all knotted over at the head, something like the club which I remember to have observed in picture-books of Jack the Giant Killer, besides being so heavy that he required to grasp it with both hands in order to wield it at all. However, he took it with him, and in this manner we set out upon our travels.

We did not consider it necessary to carry any food with us, as we knew that wherever we went we should be certain to fall in with cocoa-nut trees ; having which, we were amply supplied, as Peterkin said, with meat and drink and pocket-handkerchiefs ; I took the precaution, however, to put the burning-glass into my pocket, lest we should want fire.

The morning was exceedingly lovely. It was one of that very still and peaceful sort which made the few noises that we heard seem to be *quiet* noises. I know no other way of expressing this idea. Noises which, so far from interrupting the universal tranquillity of earth sea, and sky, rather tended to reveal to us how quiet the world round us really was. Such sounds as I refer to were, the peculiarly melancholy—yet, it seemed to me, cheerful—plaint of sea-birds floating on the glassy water or sailing in the sky, also the subdued twittering of little birds among the bushes, the faint ripples on the beach, and the solemn boom of the surf upon the distant coral reef. We felt very glad in our hearts as we walked along the sands side by side. For my part, I felt so deeply overjoyed that I was surprised at my own sensations, and fell into a reverie upon the causes of happiness. I came to the conclusion that a state of profound peace and repose, both in regard to outward object and within the soul, is the happiest condition in which man can be placed ; for although I had many a time been most joyful and happy when engaged in bustling, energetic, active pursuits or amusements, I never found that such joy or satisfaction was so deep or so pleasant to reflect upon as that which I now experienced. And I was the more confirmed in this opinion when I observed, and indeed it was told by himself, that Peterkin's happiness was also very great : yet he did not express this by dancing as was his wont, nor did he give so much as a single shout, but walked quietly between us with his eyes sparkling, and a joyful smile upon his countenance. My reader must not suppose that I thought all this in the clear and methodical manner in which I have set it down here. These thoughts did indeed pass through my mind, but they did so in a very confused and indefinite manner, for I was young at that time, and not much given to deep reflections. Neither did I consider that the peace whereof I write is not to be found in this world—at least in its perfection, although I have since learned that by religion a man may attain to a very great degree of it.

I have said that Peterkin walked along the sands between us. We had two ways of walking together about our island. When we travelled through the woods, we always did so in single file, as by this method we advanced with greater facility, the one treading in the other's footsteps. In such cases Jack always took the lead, Peterkin followed, and I brought up the rear. But when we travelled along the sands, which extended almost in an unbroken line of glistening

white round the island, we marched abreast, as we found this method more sociable, and every way more pleasant. Jack, being the tallest, walked next the sea, and Peterkin marched between us, as by this arrangement either of us could talk to him or he to us, while if Jack and I happened to wish to converse together, we could conveniently do so over Peterkin's head. Peterkin used to say in reference to this arrangement, that had he been as tall as either of us, our order of march might have been the same; for as Jack often used to scold him for letting everything we said to him pass in at one ear and out at the other, his head could of course form no interruption to our discourse.

We were now fairly started. Half-a-mile's walk conveyed us round a bend in the land which shut out our bower from view, and for some time we advanced at a brisk pace without speaking, though our eyes were not idle, but noted everything, in the woods, on the shore, or in the sea, that was interesting. After passing the ridge of land that formed one side of our valley—the Valley of the Wreck—we beheld another small vale lying before us in all the luxuriant loveliness of tropical vegetation. We had, indeed, seen it before from the mountain-top, but we had no idea that it would turn out to be so much more lovely when we were close to it. We were about to commence the exploration of this valley, when Peterkin stopped us, and directed our attention to a very remarkable appearance in advance along the shore.

"What's yon, think you?" said he, levelling his spear, as if he expected an immediate attack from the object in question, though it was full half-a-mile distant.

As he spoke, there appeared a white column above the rocks, as if of steam or spray. It rose upwards to a height of several feet, and then disappeared. Had this been near the sea, we would not have been so greatly surprised, as it might in that case have been the surf, for at this part of the coast the coral reef approached so near to the island that in some parts it almost joined it. There was therefore no lagoon between, and the heavy surf of the ocean beat almost up to the rocks. But this white column appeared about fifty yards inland. The rocks at the place were rugged, and they stretched across the sandy beach into the sea. Scarce had we ceased expressing our surprise at this sight, when another column flew upwards for a few seconds, not far from the spot where the first had been seen, and disappeared; and so, at long, irregular intervals, these strange sights recurred. We were now quite sure that the columns were watery or composed of spray, but what caused them we could not guess, so we determined to go and see.

In a few minutes we gained the spot, which was very rugged and precipitous, and, moreover, quite damp with the falling of the spray. We had much ado to pass over dry-shod. The ground also was full of holes here and there. Now, while we stood anxiously waiting for the reappearance of these waterspouts, we heard a low rumbling sound near us, which quickly increased to a gurgling and hissing noise, and a moment afterwards a thick spout of water burst upwards from a hole in the rock, and spouted into the air with much violence, and so close to where Jack and I were standing that it nearly touched us. We sprang aside, but not before a cloud of spray descended, and drenched us both to the skin.

Peterkin, who was standing farther off, escaped with a few drops, and burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter on beholding our miserable plight.

"Mind your eye!" he shouted eagerly, "there goes another!" The words were scarcely out of his mouth when there came up a spout from another hole, which served us exactly in the same manner as before.

Peterkin now shrieked with laughter; but his merriment was abruptly put a stop to by the gurgling noise occurring close to where he stood.

"Where'll it spout this time, I wonder?" he said, looking about with some anxiety, and preparing to run. Suddenly there came a loud hiss or snort; a fierce spout of water burst up between Peterkin's legs, blew him off his feet, enveloped him in its spray, and hurled him to the ground. He fell with so much violence that we feared he must have broken some bones, and ran anxiously to his assistance; but fortunately he had fallen on a clump of tangled herbage, in which he lay sprawling in a most deplorable condition.

It was now our turn to laugh; but as we were not yet quite sure that he was unhurt, and as we knew not when or where the next spout might arise, we assisted him hastily to jump up and hurry from the spot.

I may here add, that although I am quite certain that the spout of water was very strong, and that it blew Peterkin completely off his legs, I am not quite certain of the exact height to which it lifted him, being somewhat startled by the event, and blinded partially by the spray, so that my power of observation was somewhat impaired for the moment.

"What's to be done now?" asked Peterkin ruefully.

"Make a fire, and dry ourselves," replied Jack.

"And here is material ready to our hand," said I, picking up a dried branch of a tree, as we hurried up to the woods.

In about an hour after this mishap our clothes were again dried. While they were hanging up before the fire, we walked down to the beach, and soon observed that these curious spouts took place immediately after the fall of a huge wave, never before it; and, moreover, that the spouts did not take place excepting when the billow was an extremely large one. From this we concluded that there must be a subterraneous channel in the rock into which the water was driven by the larger waves, and finding no way of escape except through these small holes, was thus forced up violently through them. At any rate, we could not conceive any other reason for these strange waterspouts, and as this seemed a very simple and probable one, we forthwith adopted it.

"I say, Ralph, what's that in the water? is it a shark?" said Jack, just as we were about to quit the place.

I immediately ran to the overhanging ledge of rock, from which he was looking down into the sea, and bent over it. There I saw a very faint pale object of a greenish colour, which seemed to move slightly while I looked at it.

"It's like a fish of some sort," said I.

"Hallo, Peterkin!" cried Jack, "fetch your spear; here's work for it."

But when we tried to reach the object, the spear proved to be too short.

"There now," said Peterkin, with a sneer, "you were always telling me it was too long."

Jack now drove the spear forcibly towards the object, and let go his hold; but although it seemed to be well aimed, he must have missed, for the handle soon rose again; and when the spear was drawn up, there was the pale green object in exactly the same spot, slowly moving its tail.

"Very odd," said Jack.

But although it was undoubtedly very odd, and although Jack and all of us plunged the spear at it repeatedly, we could neither hit it nor drive it away, so we were compelled to continue our journey without discovering what it was. I was very much perplexed at this strange appearance in the water, and could not get it out of my mind for a long time afterwards. However, I quieted myself by resolving that I would pay a visit to it again at some more convenient season.

CHAPTER X.

Make discovery of many excellent roots and fruits—The resources of the Coral Island gradually unfolded—The banyan tree—Another tree which is supported by natural planks—Water-fowl found—A very remarkable discovery, and a very peculiar murder—We luxuriate on the fat of the land.

OUR examination of the little valley proved to be altogether most satisfactory. We found in it not only similar trees to those we had already seen in our own valley, but also one or two others of a different species. We had also the satisfaction of discovering a peculiar vegetable, which Jack concluded must certainly be that of which he had read as being very common among the South Sea islanders, and which was named *taro*. Also we found a large supply of yams, and another root like a potato in appearance. As these were all quite new to us, we regarded our lot as a most fortunate one, in being thus cast on an island which was so prolific and so well stored with all the necessities of life. Long afterwards we found out that this island of ours was no better in these respects than thousands of other islands in those seas. Indeed, many of them were much richer and more productive; but that did not render us the less grateful for our present good fortune. We each put one of these roots in our pocket, intending to use them for our supper; of which more hereafter. We also saw many beautiful birds here, and traces of some four-footed animal again. Meanwhile the sun began to descend, so we returned to the shore, and pushed on round the spouting rocks into the next valley. This was that valley of which I have spoken as running across the entire island. It was by far the largest and most beautiful that we had yet looked upon. Here were trees of every shape and size and hue which it is possible to conceive of, many of which we had not seen in the other valleys; for, the stream in this valley being larger, and the mould much richer than in the Valley of the Wreck, it was clothed with a more luxuriant growth of trees and plants. Some trees were dark glossy green, others of a rich and warm hue, contrasting well with those of a pale light green, which were everywhere abundant. Among these we recognized the broad dark heads of the bread-fruit, with its golden fruit; the pure

silvery foliage of the candle-nut, and several species which bore a strong resemblance to the pine ; while here and there, in groups and in single trees, rose the tall forms of the cocoa-nut palms, spreading abroad, and waving their graceful plumes high above all the rest, as if they were a superior race of stately giants keeping guard over these luxuriant forests. Oh, it was a most enchanting scene, and I thanked God for having created such delightful spots for the use of man.

Now, while we were gazing around us in silent admiration, Jack uttered an exclamation of surprise, and pointing to an object a little to one side of us, said,—

“That’s a banyan tree.”

“And what’s a banyan tree?” inquired Peterkin, as we walked towards it.

“A very curious one, as you shall see presently,” replied Jack. “It is called the *aoa* here, if I recollect rightly, and has a wonderful peculiarity about it. What an enormous one it is, to be sure !”

“*It!*” repeated Peterkin ; “why, there are dozens of banyans here ! What do you mean by talking bad grammar ? Is your philosophy deserting you, Jack ?”

“There is but one tree here of this kind,” returned Jack, “as you will perceive if you will examine it.” And, sure enough, we did find that what he had supposed was a forest of trees was in reality only one. Its bark was of a light colour, and had a shining appearance, the leaves being lance-shaped, small, and of a beautiful pea-green. But the wonderful thing about it was, that the branches, which grew out from the stem horizontally, sent down long shoots or fibres to the ground, which, taking root, had themselves become trees, and were covered with bark like the tree itself. Many of these fibres had descended from the branches at various distances, and thus supported them on natural pillars, some of which were so large and strong that it was not easy at first to distinguish the offspring from the parent stem. The fibres were of all sizes and in all states of advancement, from the pillars we have just mentioned to small cords which hung down and were about to take root, and thin brown threads still far from the ground, which swayed about with every motion of wind. In short, it seemed to us that, if there were only space afforded to it, this single tree would at length cover the whole island.

Shortly after this we came upon another remarkable tree, which, as its peculiar formation afterwards proved extremely useful to us, merits description. It was a splendid chestnut, but its proper name Jack did not know. However, there were quantities of fine nuts upon it, some of which we put in our pockets. But its stem was the wonderful part of it. It rose to about twelve feet without a branch and was not of great thickness : on the contrary, it was remarkably slender for the size of the tree ; but, to make up for this, there were four or five wonderful projections in this stem, which I cannot better describe than by asking the reader to suppose that five planks of two inches thick and three feet broad had been placed round the trunk of the tree, with their *edges* closely fixed to it, from the ground up to the branches, and that these planks had been covered over with the bark of the tree and incorporated with it. In short, they were just natural buttresses, without which the stem could not have supported its heavy and umbrageous top. We found these chestnuts to be very

numerous. They grew chiefly on the banks of the stream, and were of all sizes.

While we were examining a small tree of this kind, Jack chipped a piece off a buttress with his axe, and found the wood to be firm and easily cut. He then struck the axe into it with all his force, and very soon split it off close to the tree, first, however, having cut it across transversely above and below. By this means he satisfied himself that he could now obtain short planks, as it were all ready sawn, of any size and thickness that we desired; which was a very great discovery indeed, perhaps the most important we had yet made.

We now wended our way back to the coast, intending to encamp near the beach, as we found that the mosquitoes were troublesome in the forest. On our way we could not help admiring the birds which flew and chirped around us. Among them we observed a pretty kind of paroquet, with a green body, a blue head, and a red breast; also a few beautiful turtle-doves, and several flocks of wood-pigeons. The hues of many of these birds were extremely vivid—bright green, blue, and scarlet being the prevailing tints. We made several attempts throughout the day to bring down one of these, both with the bow and the sling—not for mere sport, but to ascertain whether they were good for food. But we invariably missed, although once or twice we were very near hitting. As evening drew on, however, a flock of pigeons flew past. I slung a stone into the midst of them at a venture, and had the good fortune to kill one. We were startled, soon after, by a loud whistling noise above our heads; and on looking up, saw a flock of wild ducks making for the coast. We watched these, and observing where they alighted, followed them up until we came upon a most lovely blue lake, not more than two hundred yards long, imbosomed in verdant trees. Its placid surface, which reflected every leaf and stem as if in a mirror, was covered with various species of wild ducks, feeding among the sedges and broad-leaved water-plants which floated on it, while numerous birds like water-hens ran to and fro most busily on its margin. These all with one accord flew tumultuously away the instant we made our appearance. While walking along the margin we observed fish in the water, but of what sort we could not tell.

Now, as we neared the shore, Jack and I said we would go a little out of our way to see if we could procure one of those ducks; so, directing Peterkin to go straight to the shore and kindle a fire, we separated, promising to rejoin him speedily. But we did not find the ducks, although we made a diligent search for half-an-hour. We were about to retrace our steps, when we were arrested by one of the strangest sights that we had yet beheld.

Just in front of us, at the distance of about ten yards, grew a superb tree, which certainly was the largest we had yet seen on the island. Its trunk was at least five feet in diameter, with a smooth grey bark; above this the spreading branches were clothed with light green leaves, amid which were clusters of bright yellow fruit, so numerous as to weigh down the boughs with their great weight. This fruit seemed to be of the plum species, of an oblong form, and a good deal larger than the *magnum bonum* plum. The ground at the foot of this tree was thickly strewn with the fallen fruit, in the midst of which lay sleeping, in every possible attitude, at least twenty

hogs of all ages and sizes, apparently quite surfeited with a recent banquet.

Jack and I could scarce restrain our laughter as we gazed at these coarse, fat, ill-looking animals while they lay groaning and snoring heavily amid the remains of their supper.

"Now Ralph," said Jack, in a low whisper, "put a stone in your sling—a good big one—and let fly at that fat fellow with his back toward you. I'll try to put an arrow into yon little pig."

"Don't you think we had better put them up first?" I whispered; "it seems cruel to kill them while asleep."

"If I wanted *sport*, Ralph, I certainly would set them up; but as we only want *pork*, we'll let them lie. Besides, we're not sure of killing them; so, fire away."

Thus admonished, I slung my stone with so good aim that it went bang against the hog's flank as if against the head of a drum; but it had no other effect than that of causing the animal to start to its feet, with a frightful yell of surprise, and scamper away. At the same instant Jack's bow twanged, and the arrow pinned the little pig to the ground by the ear.

"I've missed, after all," cried Jack, darting forward with uplifted axe, while the little pig uttered a loud squeal, tore the arrow from the ground, and ran away with it, along with the whole drove, into the bushes and disappeared, though we heard them screaming long afterwards in the distance.

"That's very provoking, now," said Jack, rubbing the point of his nose.

"Very," I replied, stroking my chin.

"Well, we must make haste and rejoin Peterkin," said Jack. "It's getting late." And without further remark we threaded our way quickly through the woods towards the shore.

When we reached it we found wood laid out, the fire lighted and beginning to kindle up, with other signs of preparation for our encampment, but Peterkin was nowhere to be found. We wondered very much at this; but Jack suggested that he might have gone to fetch water; so he gave a shout to let him know that we had arrived, and sat down upon a rock, while I threw off my jacket, and seized the axe, intending to split up one or two billets of wood. But I had scarce moved from the spot when, in the distance, we heard a most appalling shriek, which was followed up by a chorus of yells from the hogs, and a loud hurrah.

"I do believe," said I, "that Peterkin has met with the hogs."

"When Greek meets Greek," said Jack, soliloquizing, "then comes the tug of—"

"Hurrah!" shouted Peterkin in the distance.

We turned hastily towards the direction whence the sound came, and soon descried Peterkin walking along the beach towards us with a little pig transfixed on the end of his long spear!

"Well done, my boy!" exclaimed Jack, slapping him on the shoulder when he came up; "you're the best shot amongst us."

"Look here, Jack!" cried Peterkin, as he disengaged the animal from his spear. "Do you recognise that hole?" said he, pointing to the pig's ear; "and are you familiar with this arrow, eh?"

"Well, I declare!" said Jack.

"Of course you do," interrupted Peterkin; "but, pray, restrain

your declarations at this time, and let's have supper, for I'm uncommonly hungry, I can tell you ; and it's no joke to charge a whole herd of swine with their great-grandmother bristling like a giant porcupine at the head of them !"

We now set about preparing supper ; and, truly, a good display of viands we made, when all was laid out on a flat rock in the light of the blazing fire. There was, first of all, the little pig ; then there were the taro-root, and the yam, and the potato, and six plums ; and, lastly, the wood-pigeon. To these Peterkin added a bit of sugar-cane, which he had cut from a little patch of that plant which he had found not long after separating from us ; "and," said he, "the patch was somewhat in a square form, which convinces me it must have been planted by man."

"Very likely," replied Jack. "From all we have seen, I'm inclined to think that some of the savages must have dwelt here long ago."

We found no small difficulty in making up our minds how we were to cook the pig. None of us had ever cut up one before, and we did not know exactly how to begin ; besides, we had nothing but the axe to do it with, our knife having been forgotten. At last Jack started up and said,—

"Don't let us waste more time talking about it, boys.—Hold it up, Peterkin. There lay the hind leg on this block of wood—so ;" and he cut it off, with a large portion of the haunch, at a single blow of the axe. "Now the other—that's it." And having thus cut off the two hind legs, he made several deep gashes in them, thrust a sharp-pointed stick through each, and stuck them up before the blaze to roast. The wood-pigeon was then split open, quite flat, washed clean in salt water, and treated in a similar manner. While these were cooking, we scraped a hole in the sand and ashes under the fire, into which we put our vegetables and covered them up.

The taro-root was of an oval shape, about ten inches long and four or five thick. It was of a mottled-gray colour, and had a thick rind. We found it somewhat like an Irish potato, and exceedingly good. The yam was roundish, and had a rough brown skin. It was very sweet and well flavoured. The potato, we were surprised to find, was quite sweet and exceedingly palatable, as also were the plums ; and, indeed, the pork and pigeon too, when we came to taste them. Altogether this was decidedly the most luxurious supper we had enjoyed for many a day ; and Jack said it was out-of-sight better than we ever got on board ship ; and Peterkin said he feared that if we should remain long on the island he would infallibly become a glutton or an epicure : whereat Jack remarked that he need not fear that, for he was *both* already ! And so, having eaten our fill, not forgetting to finish off with a plum, we laid ourselves comfortably down to sleep upon a couch of branches, under the overhanging ledge of a coral rock.

CHAPTER XI.

Effects of over-eating, and reflections thereon—Humble advice regarding cold water—The "horrible cry" accounted for—The curious birds called penguins—Peculiarity of the cocoa-nut palm—Questions on the formation of coral Islands—Mysterious footsteps—Strange discoveries and sad sights.

WHEN we awoke on the following morning, we found that the sun

was already a good way above the horizon, so I came to the conclusion that a heavy supper is not conducive to early rising. Nevertheless, we felt remarkably strong and well, and much disposed to have our breakfast. First, however, we had our customary morning bathe, which refreshed us greatly.

I have often wondered very much in after years that the inhabitants of my own dear land did not make more frequent use of this most charming element, water. I mean in the way of cold bathing. Of course, I have perceived that it is not convenient for them to go into the sea or the rivers in winter, as we used to do on the Coral Island; but then I knew from experience that a large washing-tub and a sponge do form a most pleasant substitute. The feelings of freshness, of cleanliness, of vigour, and extreme hilarity, that always followed my bathes in the sea, and even, when in England, my ablutions in the wash-tub, were so delightful, that I would sooner have gone without my breakfast than without my bathe in cold water. My readers will forgive me for asking whether they are in the habit of bathing thus every morning; and if they answer "No," they will pardon me for recommending them to begin at once. Of late years, since retiring from the stirring life of adventure which I have led so long in foreign climes, I have heard of a system called the cold-water cure. Now, I do not know much about that system, so I do not mean to uphold it, neither do I intend to run it down. Perhaps, in reference to it, I may just hint that there may be too much of a good thing. I know not; but of this I am quite certain, that there may also be too little of a good thing; and the great delight I have had in cold bathing during the course of my adventurous career inclines me to think that it is better to risk taking too much than to content one's self with too little. Such is my opinion, derived from much experience; but I put it before my readers with the utmost diffidence and with profound modesty, knowing that it may possibly jar with their feelings of confidence in their own ability to know and judge as to what is best and fittest in reference to their own affairs. But, to return from this digression, for which I humbly crave forgiveness:

We had not advanced on our journey much above a mile or so, and were just beginning to feel the pleasant glow that usually accompanies vigorous exercise, when, on turning a point that revealed to us a new and beautiful cluster of islands, we were suddenly arrested by the appalling cry which had so alarmed us a few nights before. But this time we were by no means so much alarmed as on the previous occasion, because, whereas at that time it was night, now it was day; and I have always found, though I am unable to account for it, that daylight banishes many of the fears that are apt to assail us in the dark.

On hearing the sound, Peterkin instantly threw forward his spear.

"Now, what can it be?" said he, looking round at Jack. "I tell you what it is: if we are to go on being pulled up in a constant state of horror and astonishment, as we have been for the last week, the sooner we're out of this island the better, notwithstanding the yams and lemonade, and pork and plums!"

Peterkin's remark was followed by a repetition of the cry, louder than before.

"It comes from one of these islands," said Jack.

"It must be the ghost of a jackass, then," said Peterkin, "for I never heard anything so like."

We all turned our eyes towards the cluster of islands, where, on the largest, we observed curious objects moving on the shore.

"Soldiers they are—that's flat!" cried Peterkin, gazing at them in the utmost amazement.

And, in truth, Peterkin's remark seemed to me to be correct; for, at the distance from which we saw them, they appeared to be an army of soldiers. There they stood, rank and file, in lines and in squares, marching and countermarching, with blue coats and white trousers. While we were looking at them, the dreadful cry came again over the water, and Peterkin suggested that it must be a regiment sent out to massacre the natives in cold blood. At this remark Jack laughed and said,—

"Why, Peterkin, they are penguins!"

"Penguins?" repeated Peterkin.

"Ay, penguins, Peterkin, penguins—nothing more or less than big sea-birds, as you shall see one of these days, when we pay them a visit in our boat, which I mean to set about building the moment we return to our bower.

"So, then, our dreadful yelling ghosts and our murdering army of soldiers," remarked Peterkin, "have dwindled down to penguins—big sea-birds! Very good. Then I propose that we continue our journey as fast as possible, lest our island should be converted into a dream before we get completely round it.

Now, as we continued on our way, I pondered much over this new discovery, and the singular appearance of these birds, of which Jack could only give us a very slight and vague account; and I began to long to commence to our boat, in order that we might go and inspect them more narrowly. But by degrees these thoughts left me, and I began to be much taken up again with the interesting peculiarities of the country which we were passing through.

The second night we passed in a manner somewhat similar to the first, at about two-thirds of the way round the island, as we calculated, and we hoped to sleep on the night following at our bower. I will not here note so particularly all that we said and saw during the course of this second day, as we did not make any further discoveries of great importance. The shore along which we travelled, and the various parts of the woods through which we passed, were similar to those which have been already treated of. There were one or two observations that we made, however, and these were as follows:—

We saw that, while many of the large fruit-bearing trees grew only in the valleys, and some of them only near the banks of the streams, where the soil was peculiarly rich, the cocoa-nut palm grew in every place whatsoever; not only on the hillsides, but also on the sea-shore, and even, as has been already stated, on the coral reef itself, where the soil, if we may use the name, was nothing better than loose sand mingled with broken shells and coral rock. So near to the sea, too, did this useful tree grow, that in many places its roots were washed by the spray from the breakers. Yet we found the trees growing thus on the sands to be quite as luxuriant as those growing in the valleys, and the fruit as good and refreshing also. Besides this, I noticed that on the summit of the high mountain, which we once more ascended at a different point from our first

ascent, were found abundance of shells and broken coral formations ; which Jack and I agreed proved either that this island must have once been under the sea, or that the sea must once have been above the island. In other words, that as shells and coral could not possibly climb to the mountain-top, they must have been washed upon it while the mountain top was on a level with the sea. We pondered this very much ; and we put to ourselves the question, "What raised the island to its present height above the sea?" But to this we could by no means give to ourselves a satisfactory reply. Jack thought it might have been blown up by a volcano ; and Peterkin said he thought it must have jumped up of its own accord ! We also noticed, what had escaped us before, that the solid rocks of which the island was formed were quite different from the live coral rocks on the shore, where the wonderful little insects were continually working. They seemed, indeed, to be of the same material—a substance like limestone ; but while the coral rocks were quite full of minute cells in which the insects lived, the other rocks inland were hard and solid, without the appearance of cells at all. Our thoughts and conversations on this subject were sometimes so profound that Peterkin said we should certainly get drowned in them at last, even although we were such good divers ! Nevertheless, we did not allow his pleasantry on this and similar points to deter us from making our notes and observations as we went along.

We found several more droves of hogs in the woods, but abstained from killing any of them, having more than sufficient for our present necessities. We saw also many of their footprints in this neighbourhood. Among these we also observed the footprints of a smaller animal, which we examined with much care, but could form no certain opinion as to them. Peterkin thought they were those of a little dog, but Jack and I thought differently. We became very curious on this matter, the more so that we observed these footprints to lie scattered about in one locality, as if the animal which had made them was wandering round about in a very irregular manner, and without any object in view. Early in the forenoon of our third day we observed these footprints to be much more numerous than ever, and in one particular spot they diverged off into the woods in a regular beaten track, which was, however, so closely beset with bushes that we pushed through it with difficulty. We had now become so anxious to find out what animal this was and where it went to, that we determined to follow the track, and, if possible, clear up the mystery. Peterkin said, in a bantering tone, that he was sure it would be cleared up, as usual, in some frightfully simple way, and prove to be no mystery at all !

The beaten track seemed much too large to have been formed by the animal itself, and we concluded that some larger animal had made it, and that the smaller one made use of it. But everywhere the creeping plants and tangled bushes crossed our path, so that we forced our way along with some difficulty. Suddenly, as we came upon an open space, we heard a faint cry, and observed a black animal standing in the track before us.

"A wild cat !" cried Jack, fitting an arrow to his bow, and discharging it so hastily that he missed the animal, and hit the earth about half a foot to one side of it. To our surprise the wild cat did not fly, but walked slowly towards the arrow and snuffed at it.

"That's the most comical wild cat I ever saw !" cried Jack.

"It's a tame wild cat, I think," said Peterkin, levelling his spear to make a charge.

"Stop !" cried I, laying my hand on his shoulder ; "I do believe the poor beast is blind. See, it strikes against the branches as it walks along. It must be a very old one ;" and I hastened towards it.

"Only think," said Peterkin, with a suppressed laugh, "of a superannuated wild cat !"

We now found that the poor cat was not only blind, or nearly so, but extremely deaf, as it did not hear our footsteps until we were quite close behind it. Then it sprang round, and putting up its back and tail, while the black hair stood all on end, uttered a hoarse mew and a puff.

"Poor thing !" said Peterkin, gently extending his hand, and endeavouring to pat the cat's head. "Poor pussy ; chee, chee, chee ; puss, puss, puss ; cheetie pussy !"

No sooner did the cat hear these sounds than all signs of anger fled, and advancing eagerly to Peterkin, it allowed itself to be stroked, and rubbed itself against his legs, purring loudly all the time, and showing every symptom of the most extreme delight.

"It's no more a wild cat than I am !" cried Peterkin, taking it in his arms ; "it's quite tame.—Poor pussy, cheetie pussy !"

We now crowded around Peterkin, and were not a little surprised, and, to say truth, a good deal affected, by the sight of the poor animal's excessive joy. It rubbed its head against Peterkin's cheek, licked his chin, and thrust its head almost violently into his neck, while it purred more loudly than I ever heard a cat purr before, and appeared to be so much overpowered by its feelings, that it occasionally mewed and purred almost in the same breath. Such demonstrations of joy and affection led us at once to conclude that this poor cat must have known man before, and we conjectured that it had been left either accidentally or by design on the island many years ago, and was now evincing its extreme joy at meeting once more with human beings. While we were fondling the cat and talking about it, Jack glanced round the open space in the midst of which we stood.

"Hallo !" exclaimed he ; "this looks something like a clearing. The axe has been at work here. Just look at these tree-stumps."

We now turned to examine these, and without doubt we found trees that had been cut down here and there, also stumps and broken branches ; all of which, however, were completely covered over with moss, and bore evidence of having been in this condition for some years. No human footprints were to be seen either on the track or among the bushes, but those of the cat were found everywhere. We now determined to follow up the track as far as it went, and Peterkin put the cat down ; but it seemed to be so weak, and mewed so very pitifully, that he took it up again and carried it in his arms, where in a few minutes it fell sound asleep.

About ten yards farther on, the felled trees became more numerous, and the track, diverging to the right, followed for a short space the banks of a stream. Suddenly we came to a spot where once must have been a rude bridge, the stones of which were scattered in the stream, and those on each bank entirely covered over with moss. In silent surprise and expectancy we continued to advance, and, a few yards farther on, beheld, under the shelter of the bread-fruit trees, a

small hut or cottage. I cannot hope to convey to my readers a very correct idea of the feelings that affected us on witnessing this unexpected sight. We stood for a long time in silent wonder, for there was a deep and most melancholy stillness about the place that quite overpowered us ; and when we did at length speak, it was in subdued whispers, as if we were surrounded by some awful or supernatural influence. Even Peterkin's voice, usually so quick and lively on all occasions, was hushed now ; for there was a dreariness about this silent, lonely, uninhabited cottage—so strange in its appearance, so far away from the usual dwellings of man, so old, decayed, and deserted in its aspect—that fell upon our spirits like a thick cloud, and blotted out as with a pall the cheerful sunshine that had filled us since the commencement of our tour round the island.

The hut or cottage was rude and simple in its construction. It was not more than twelve feet long by ten feet broad, and about seven or eight feet high. It had one window, or rather a small frame in which a window might perhaps once have been, but which was now empty. The door was exceedingly low, and formed of rough boards, and the roof was covered with broad cocoa-nut and plantain leaves. But every part of it was in a state of the utmost decay. Moss and green matter grew in spots all over it. The wood-work was quite perforated with holes ; the roof had nearly fallen in, and appeared to be prevented from doing so altogether by the thick matting of creeping-plants and the interlaced branches which years of neglect had allowed to cover it almost entirely ; while the thick, luxuriant branches of the bread-fruit and other trees spread above it, and flung a deep, sombre shadow over the spot, as if to guard it from the heat and the light of day. We conversed long and in whispers about this strange habitation ere we ventured to approach it ; and when at length we did so, it was, at least on my part, with feelings of awe.

At first Jack endeavoured to peep in at the window, but from the deep shadow of the trees already mentioned, and the gloom within, he could not clearly discern objects ; so we lifted the latch and pushed open the door. We observed that the latch was made of iron, and almost eaten away with rust. In the like condition were also the hinges, which creaked as the door swung back. On entering, we stood still and gazed around us, while we were much impressed with the dreary stillness of the room. But what we saw there surprised and shocked us not a little. There was no furniture in the apartment save a little wooden stool and an iron pot, the latter almost eaten through with rust. In the corner farthest from the door was a low bedstead, on which lay two skeletons, embedded in a little heap of dry dust. With beating hearts we went forward to examine them. One was the skeleton of a man, the other that of a dog, which was extended close beside that of the man, with its head resting on his bosom.

Now we were very much concerned about this discovery, and could scarce refrain from tears on beholding these sad remains. After some time, we began to talk about what we had seen, and to examine in and around the hut, in order to discover some clue to the name or history of this poor man, who had thus died in solitude, with none to mourn his loss save his cat and his faithful dog. But we found nothing—neither a book nor a scrap of paper. We found, however, the decayed remnants of what appeared to have been

clothing, and an old axe. But none of these things bore marks of any kind ; and, indeed, they were so much decayed as to convince us that they had lain in the condition in which we found them for many years.

This discovery now accounted to us for the tree-stump at the top of the mountain with the initials cut on it ; also for the patch of sugar-cane and other traces of man which we had met with in the course of our rambles over the island. And we were much saddened by the reflection that the lot of this poor wanderer might possibly be our own, after many years' residence on the island, unless we should be rescued by the visit of some vessel or the arrival of natives. Having no clue whatever to account for the presence of this poor human being in such a lonely spot, we fell to conjecturing what could have brought him there. I was inclined to think that he must have been a shipwrecked sailor, whose vessel had been lost here, and all the crew been drowned except himself and his dog and cat. But Jack thought it more likely that he had run away from his vessel, and had taken the dog and cat to keep him company. We were also much occupied in our minds with the wonderful difference between the cat and the dog. For here we saw that while the one perished like a loving friend by its master's side, with its head resting on his bosom, the other had sought to sustain itself by prowling abroad in the forest, and had lived in solitude to a good old age. However, we did not conclude from this that the cat was destitute of affection, for we could not forget its emotions on first meeting with us ; but we saw from this that the dog had a great deal more of generous love in its nature than the cat, because it not only found it impossible to live after the death of its master, but it must needs, when it came to die, crawl to his side and rest its head upon his lifeless breast.

While we were thinking on these things, and examining into everything about the room, we were attracted by an exclamation from Peterkin.

"I say, Jack," said he, "here is something that will be of use to us."

"What is it?" said Jack, hastening across the room.

"An old pistol," replied Peterkin, holding up the weapon, which he had just pulled from under a heap of broken wood and rubbish that lay in a corner.

"That, indeed, might have been useful," said Jack, examining it, "if we had any powder ; but I suspect the bow and the sling will prove more serviceable."

"True, I forgot that," said Peterkin ; "but we may as well take it with us, for the flint will serve to strike fire with when the sun does not shine."

After having spent more than an hour at this place without discovering anything of further interest, Peterkin took up the old cat, which had lain very contentedly asleep on the stool whereon he had placed it, and we prepared to take our departure. In leaving the hut, Jack stumbled heavily against the door-post, which was so much decayed as to break across, and the whole fabric of the hut seemed ready to fall about our ears. This put into our heads that we might as well pull it down, and so form a mound over the skeleton. Jack, therefore with his axe, cut down the other door-post, which when it was done, brought the whole hut in ruins to the ground, and thus formed a grave to the bones of the poor recluse and his dog. Then

we left the spot, having brought away the iron pot, the pistol, and the old axe, as they might be of much use to us hereafter.

During the rest of this day we pursued our journey, and examined the other end of the large valley, which we found to be so much alike to the parts already described, that I shall not recount the particulars of what we saw in this place. I may, however, remark that we did not quite recover our former cheerful spirits until we arrived at our bower, which we did late in the evening, and found everything just in the same condition as we had left it three days before.

CHAPTER XII.

*Something wrong with the tank—Jack's wisdom and Peterkin's impertinence—
Wonderful behaviour of a crab—Good wishes for those who dwell far from
the sea—Jack commences to build a little boat.*

REST is sweet as well for the body as for the mind. During my long experience, amid the vicissitudes of a chequered life, I have found that periods of profound rest at certain intervals, in addition to the ordinary hours of repose, are necessary to the well-being of man. And the nature as well as the period of this rest varies, according to the different temperaments of individuals, and the peculiar circumstances in which they may chance to be placed. To those who work with their minds, bodily labour is rest. To those who labour with the body, deep sleep is rest. To the downcast, the weary, and the sorrowful, joy and peace are rest. Nay, further, I think that to the gay, the frivolous, the reckless, when sated with pleasures that cannot last, even sorrow proves to be rest of a kind, although, perchance, it were better that I should call it relief than rest. There is, indeed, but one class of men to whom rest is denied—there is no rest to the wicked. At this I do but hint, however, as I treat not of that rest which is spiritual, but, more particularly, of that which applies to the mind and to the body.

Of this rest we stood much in need on our return home, and we found it exceedingly sweet when we indulged in it after completing the journey just related. It had not, indeed, been a very long journey, nevertheless we had pursued it so diligently that our frames were not a little prostrated. Our minds were also very much exhausted in consequence of the many surprises, frequent alarms, and much profound thought to which they had been subjected; so that when we lay down on the night of our return under the shelter of the bower, we fell immediately into very deep repose. I can state this with much certainty, for Jack afterwards admitted the fact, and Peterkin, although he stoutly denied it, I heard snoring loudly at least two minutes after lying down. In this condition we remained all night and the whole of the following day without awaking once, or so much as moving our positions. When we did awake it was near sunset, and we were all in such a state of lassitude that we merely rose to swallow a mouthful of food. As Peterkin remarked, in the midst of a yawn, we took breakfast at tea-time, and then went to bed again, where we lay till the following forenoon.

After this we arose very greatly refreshed, but much alarmed lest we had lost count of a day. I say we were much alarmed on this head, for we had carefully kept count of the days since we were cast

upon our island, in order that we might remember the Sabbath-day, which day we had hitherto with one accord kept as a day of rest, and refrained from all work whatsoever. However, on considering the subject, we all three entertained the same opinion as to how long we had slept, and so our minds were put at ease.

We now hastened to our Water Garden to enjoy a bathe, and to see how did the animals which I had placed in the tank. We found the garden more charming, pellucid, and inviting than ever, and Jack and I plunged into its depth and gambolled among its radiant coral groves, while Peterkin wallowed at the surface, and tried occasionally to kick us as we passed below. Having dressed, I then hastened to the tank; but what was my surprise and grief to find nearly all the animals dead, and the water in a putrid condition! I was greatly distressed at this, and wondered what could be the cause of it.

"Why, you precious humbug," said Peterkin, coming up to me, "how could you expect it to be otherwise? When fishes are accustomed to live in the Pacific Ocean, how can you expect them to exist in a hole like that?"

"Indeed, Peterkin," I replied, "there seems to be truth in what you say. Nevertheless, now I think of it, there must be some error in your reasoning; for if I put in but a few very small animals, they will bear the same proportion to this pond that the millions of fish bear to the ocean."

"I say, Jack," cried Peterkin, waving his hand, "come here, like a good fellow. Ralph is actually talking philosophy. Do come to our assistance, for he's out o' sight beyond me already!"

"What's the matter?" inquired Jack, coming up, while he endeavoured to scrub his long hair dry with a towel of cocoa-nut cloth.

I repeated my thoughts to Jack who, I was happy to find, quite agreed with me. "The best plan," he said, "will be to put very few animals at first into your tank, and add more as you find it will bear them. And look here," he added, pointing to the sides of the tank, which, for the space of two inches above the water-level, were incrustated with salt, "you must carry your philosophy a little farther, Ralph. That water has evaporated so much that it is too salt for anything to live in. You will require to add *fresh* water now and then, in order to keep it at the same degree of saltiness as the sea."

"Very true, Jack; that never struck me before," said I.

"And now I think of it," continued Jack, "it seems to me that the surest way of arranging your tank so as to get it to keep pure and in good condition, will be to *imitate* the ocean in it. In fact, make it a miniature Pacific. I don't see how you can hope to succeed unless you do that."

"Most true," said I, pondering what my companion said. "But I fear that that will be very difficult."

"Not at all," cried Jack, rolling his towel up into a ball and throwing it into the face of Peterkin, who had been grinning and winking at him during the last five minutes—"not at all. Look here. There is water of a certain saltiness in the sea; well, fill your tank with sea-water, and keep it at that saltiness by marking the height at which the water stands on the sides. When it evaporates a little, pour in *fresh* water from the brook till it comes up to the

mark, and then it will be right, for the salt does not evaporate with the water. Then there's lots of sea-weed in the sea; well, go and get one or two bits of sea-weed, and put them into your tank. Of course the weed must be alive, and growing to little stones; or you can chip a bit off the rocks with the weed sticking to it. Then, if you like, you can throw a little sand and gravel into your tank, and the thing's complete."

"Nay, not quite," said Peterkin, who had been gravely attentive to this off-hand advice—"not quite; you must first make three little men to dive in it before it can be said to be perfect; and that would be rather difficult, I fear, for two of them would require to be philosophers. But hallo! what's this? I say, Ralph, look here. There's one o' your crabs up to something uncommon. It's performing the most remarkable operation for a crab I ever saw--taking off its coat, I do believe, before going to bed!"

We hastily stooped over the tank, and certainly were not a little amused at the conduct of one of the crabs which still survived its companions. It was one of the common small crabs, like to those that are found running about everywhere on the coasts of England. While we gazed at it, we observed its back to split away from the lower part of its body, and out of the gap thus formed came a soft lump which moved and wreathed unceasingly. This lump continued to increase in size until it appeared like a bunch of crab's legs; and, indeed, such it proved in a very few minutes to be, for the points of the toes were at length extricated from the hole in its back, the legs spread out, the body followed, and the crab walked away quite entire, even to the points of its nipper-claws, leaving a perfectly entire shell behind it, so that, when we looked, it seemed as though there were two complete crabs instead of one.

"Well!" exclaimed Peterkin, drawing a long breath, "I've *heard* of a man jumping out of his skin and sitting down in his skeleton in order to cool himself, but I never expected to *see* a crab do it!"

We were, in truth, much amazed at this spectacle, and the more so when we observed that the new crab was larger than the crab that it came out of. It was also quite soft, but by next morning its skin had hardened into a good shell. We came thus to know that crabs grow in this way, and not by the growing of their shells, as we had always thought before we saw this wonderful operation.

Now I considered well the advice which Jack had given me about preparing my tank, and the more I thought of it the more I came to regard it as very sound and worthy of being acted on. So I forthwith put his plan in execution, and found it to answer excellently well, indeed much beyond my expectation; for I found that after a little experience had taught me the proper proportion of sea-weed and animals to put into a certain amount of water, the tank needed no farther attendance; and, moreover, I did not require ever afterwards to renew or change the sea-water, but only to add a very little fresh water from the brook, now and then, as the other evaporated. I therefore concluded that if I had been suddenly conveyed, along with my tank, into some region where there was no salt sea at all, my little sea and my sea-fish would have continued to thrive and to prosper notwithstanding. This made me greatly to desire that those people in the world who live far inland might know of my wonderful tank, and, by having materials like to those of which it was made

conveyed to them, thus be enabled to watch the habits of those most mysterious animals that reside in the sea, and examine with their own eyes the wonders of the great deep.

For many days after this, while Peterkin and Jack were busily employed in building a little boat out of the curious natural planks of the chestnut tree, I spent much of my time in examining with the burning glass the marvellous operations that were constantly going on in my tank. Here I saw those anemones which cling, like little red, yellow, and green blobs of jelly, to the rocks, put forth, as it were, a multitude of arms and wait till little fish or other small animalcules unwarily touched them, when they would instantly seize them, fold arm after arm around their victims, and so engulf them in their stomachs. Here I saw the ceaseless working of those little coral insects whose efforts have encrusted the islands of the Pacific with vast rocks and surrounded them with enormous reefs. And I observed that many of these insects, though extremely minute, were very beautiful, coming out of their holes in a circle of fine threads, and having the form of a shuttle-cock. Here I saw curious little barnacles opening a hole in their backs and constantly putting out a thin feathery hand, with which, I doubt not, they dragged their food into their mouths. Here, also, I saw those crabs which have shells only on the front of their bodies, but no shell whatever on their remarkably tender tails, so that, in order to find a protection to them, they thrust them into the empty shells of wilks, or some such fish, and when they grow too big for one, change into another. But, most curious of all, I saw an animal which had the wonderful power, when it became ill, of casting its stomach and its teeth away from it, and getting an entirely new set in the course of a few months! All this I saw, and a great deal more, by means of my tank and my burning-glass; but I refrain from setting down more particulars here, as I have still much to tell of the adventures that befell us while we remained on this island.

CHAPTER XIII.

Notable discovery at the spouting cliffs—The mysterious green monster explained—We are thrown into unutterable terror by the idea that Jack is drowned—The Diamond Cave.

"COME, Jack," cried Peterkin, one morning about three weeks after our return from our long excursion, "let's be jolly to-day, and do something vigorous. I'm quite tired of hammering and bammering, hewing and screwing, cutting and butting, at that little boat of ours, that seems as hard to build as Noah's ark. Let us go on an excursion to the mountain-top, or have a hunt after the wild ducks, or make a dash at the pigs. I'm quite flat—flat as bad ginger-beer—flat as a pan-cake; in fact, I want something to rouse me, to toss me up, as it were. Eh! what do you say to it?"

"Well," answered Jack, throwing down the axe with which he was just about to proceed towards the boat, "if that's what you want, I would recommend you to make an excursion to the water-spouts. The last one we had to do with tossed you up a considerable height; perhaps the next will send you higher, who knows, if you're at all reasonable or moderate in your expectations!"

"Jack, my dear boy," said Peterkin gravely, "you are really becoming too fond of jesting. It's a thing I don't at all approve of, and if you don't give it up, I fear that, for our mutual good, we shall have to part."

"Well then, Peterkin," replied Jack, with a smile, "what would you have?"

"Have?" said Peterkin; "I would *have* nothing. I didn't say I wanted to *have*; I said that I wanted to *do*."

"By-the-bye," said I, interrupting their conversation, "I am reminded by this that we have not yet discovered the nature of yon curious appearance that we saw near the water-spouts, on our journey round the island. Perhaps it would be well to go for that purpose."

"Humph!" ejaculated Peterkin, "I know the nature of it well enough."

"What was it?" said I.

"It was of a *mysterious* nature to be sure!" said he, with a wave of his hand, while he rose from the log on which he had been sitting and buckled on his belt, into which he thrust his enormous club.

"Well, then, let us away to the water-spouts," cried Jack, going up to the bower for his bow and arrows; "and bring your spear, Peterkin. It may be useful."

We now, having made up our minds to examine into this matter, sallied forth eagerly in the direction of the water-spout rocks, which, as I have before mentioned, were not far from our present place of abode. On arriving there we hastened down to the edge of the rocks and gazed over into the sea, where we observed the pale-green object still distinctly visible, moving its tail slowly to and fro in the water.

"Most remarkable!" said Jack.

"Exceedingly curious!" said I.

"Beats everything!" said Peterkin.

"Now, Jack," he added, you made such a poor figure in your last attempt to stick to that object, that I would advise you to let me try it. If it has got a heart at all, I'll engage to send my spear right through the core of it; if it hasn't got a heart, I'll send it through the spot where its heart ought to be."

"Fire away then, my boy," replied Jack with a laugh.

Peterkin immediately took the spear, poised it for a second or two above his head, then darted it like an arrow into the sea. Down it went straight into the centre of the green object, passed quite through it, and came up immediately afterwards, pure and unsullied, while the mysterious tail moved quietly as before.

"Now," said Peterkin gravely, "that brute is a heartless monster; I'll have nothing more to do with it."

"I'm pretty sure now," said Jack, "that it is merely a phosphoric light; but I must say I'm puzzled at its staying always in that exact spot."

I also was much puzzled, and inclined to think with Jack that it must be phosphoric light, of which luminous appearance we had seen much while on our voyage to these seas. "But," said I, "there is nothing to hinder us from diving down to it, now that we are sure it is not a shark."

"True," returned Jack, stripping off his clothes; "I'll go down, Ralph, as I'm better at diving than you are.—Now then, Peterkin,

out o' the road!" Jack stepped forward joined his hands above his head, bent over the rocks, and plunged into the sea. For a second or two the spray caused by his dive hid him from view; then the water became still, and we saw him swimming far down in the midst of the green object. Suddenly he sank below it, and vanished altogether from our sight! We gazed anxiously down at the spot where he had disappeared for nearly a minute, expecting every moment to see him rise again for breath; but fully a minute passed, and still he did not reappear. Two minutes passed! and then a flood of alarm rushed in upon my soul, when I considered that, during all my acquaintance with him, Jack had never stayed under water more than a minute at a time; indeed seldom so long.

"O Peterkin!" I said, in a voice that trembled with increasing anxiety, "something has happened. It is more than three minutes now." But Peterkin did not answer, and I observed that he was gazing down into the water with a look of intense fear mingled with anxiety, while his face was overspread with a deadly paleness. Suddenly he sprang to his feet and rushed about in a frantic state, wringing his hands, and exclaiming, "O Jack, Jack! he is gone! It must have been a shark, and he is gone for ever!"

For the next five minutes I know not what I did; the intensity of my feelings almost bereft me of my senses. But I was recalled to myself by Peterkin seizing me by the shoulder and staring wildly into my face while he exclaimed, "Ralph! Ralph! perhaps he has only fainted. Dive for him, Ralph!"

It seemed strange that this did not occur to me sooner. In a moment I rushed to the edge of the rocks, and, without waiting to throw off my garments, was on the point to spring into the waves, when I observed something black rising up through the green object. In another moment Jack's head rose to the surface, and he gave a wild shout, flinging back the spray from his locks, as was his wont after a dive. Now we were almost as much amazed at seeing him reappear, well and strong, as we had been at first at his non-appearance; for, to the best of our judgment, he had been nearly ten minutes under water, perhaps longer, and it required no exertion of our reason to convince us that this was utterly impossible for mortal man to do and retain his strength and faculties. It was therefore a feeling akin to superstitious awe that I held down my hand and assisted him to clamber up the steep rocks. But no such feeling affected Peterkin. No sooner did Jack gain the rocks and seat himself on one, panting for breath, then he threw his arms round his neck and burst into a flood of tears. "O Jack, Jack!" said he, "where were you? What kept you so long?"

After a few moments Peterkin become composed enough to sit still and listen to Jack's explanation, although he could not restrain himself from attempting to wink every two minutes at me, in order to express his joy at Jack's safety. I say he attempted to wink, but I am bound to add that he did not succeed, for his eyes were so much swollen with weeping, that his frequent attempts only resulted in a series of violent and altogether idiotical contortions of the face, that were very far from expressing what he intended. However, I knew what the poor fellow meant by it, so I smiled to him in return, and endeavoured to make believe that he was winking.

"Now, lads," said Jack, when we were composed enough to listen

to him, "you green object is not a shark ; it is a stream of light issuing from a cave in the rocks. Just after I made my dive, I observed that this light came from the side of the rock above which we are now sitting ; so I struck out for it, and saw an opening into some place or other that appeared to be luminous within. For one instant I paused to think whither I ought to venture. Then I made up my mind, and dashed into it. For you see, Peterkin, although I take some time to tell this, it happened in the space of a few seconds, so that I knew I had wind enough in me to serve to bring me out of the hole and up to the surface again. Well, I was just on the point of turning—for I began to feel a little uncomfortable in such a place—when it seemed to me as if there was a faint light right above me. I darted upward, and found my head out of water. This relieved me greatly, for I now felt that I could take in air enough to enable me to return the way I came. Then it all at once occurred to me that I might not be able to find the way out again ; but on glancing downwards, my mind was put quite at rest by seeing the green light below me streaming into the cave, just like the light that we had seen streaming out of it, only what I now saw was much brighter.

"At first I could scarcely see anything as I gazed around me, it was so dark ; but gradually my eyes became accustomed to it, and I found that I was in a huge cave, part of the walls of which I observed on each side of me. The ceiling just above me was also visible, and I fancied that I could perceive beautiful glittering objects there ; but the further end of the cave was shrouded in darkness. While I was looking around me in great wonder, it came into my head that you two would think I was drowned ; so I plunged down through the passage again in a great hurry, rose to the surface, and—here I am !"

When Jack concluded his recital of what he had seen in this remarkable cave, I could not rest satisfied till I had dived down to see it ; which I did, but found it so dark, as Jack had said, that I could scarcely see anything. When I returned, we had a long conversation about it, during which I observed that Peterkin had a most lugubrious expression on his countenance.

"What's the matter, Peterkin ?" said I.

"The matter ?" he replied. "It's all very well for you two to be talking away like mermaids about the wonders of this cave, but you know I must be content to hear about it, while you are enjoying yourselves down there like mad dolphins. It's really too bad."

"I'm very sorry for you, Peterkin, indeed I am," said Jack, "but we cannot help you. If you would only learn to dive—"

"Learn to fly, you might as well say !" retorted Peterkin, in a very sulky tone.

"If you would only consent to keep still," said I, "we would take you down with us in ten seconds."

"Hum !" returned Peterkin ; "suppose a salamander was to propose to you 'only to keep still,' and he would carry you through a blazing fire in a few seconds, what would you say ?"

We both laughed and shook our heads, for it was evident that nothing was to be made of Peterkin in the water. But we could not rest satisfied till we had seen more of this cave ; so, after further consultation, Jack and I determined to try if we could take down a torch with us, and set fire to it in the cavern. This we found to be an undertaking of no small difficulty, but we accomplished it at last

by the following means :—First, we made a torch of a very inflammable nature out of the bark of a certain tree, which we cut into strips, and, after twisting, cemented together with a kind of resin or gum, which we also obtained from another tree ; neither of which trees, however, was known by name to Jack. This, when prepared, we wrapped up in a great number of plies of cocoa nut cloth, so that we were confident it could not get wet during the short time it should be under water. Then we took a small piece of the tinder, which we had carefully treasured up lest we should require it, as before said, when the sun should fail us ; also, we rolled up some dry grass and a few chips, which, with a little bow and drill, like those described before, we made into another bundle, and wrapped it up in cocoa nut cloth. When all was ready we laid aside our garments, with the exception of our trousers, which, as we did not know what rough scraping against the rocks we might be subjected to, we kept on.

Then we advanced to the edge of the rocks, Jack carrying one bundle, with the torch, I the other, with the things for producing fire.

“Now don’t weary for us, Peterkin, should we be gone some time,” said Jack ; “we’ll be sure to return in half-an-hour at the very latest, however interesting the cave should be, that we may relieve your mind.”

“Farewell !” said Peterkin, coming up to us with a look of deep but pretended solemnity, while he shook hands and kissed each of us on the cheek. “Farewell ! and while you are gone I shall repose my weary limbs under the shelter of this bush, and meditate on the changefulness of all things earthly, with special reference to the forsaken condition of a poor shipwrecked sailor boy !” So saying, Peterkin waved his hand, turned from us, and cast himself upon the ground with a look of melancholy resignation, which was so well feigned that I would have thought it genuine had he not accompanied it with a gentle wink. We both laughed, and, springing from the rocks together, plunged head first into the sea.

We gained the interior of the submarine cave without difficulty, and on emerging from the waves, supported ourselves for some time by treading-water, while we held the two bundles above our heads. This we did in order to let our eyes become accustomed to the obscurity. Then, when we could see sufficiently, we swam to a shelving rock, and landed in safety. Having wrung the water from our trousers, and dried ourselves as well as we could under the circumstances, we proceeded to ignite the torch. This we accomplished without difficulty in a few minutes ; and no sooner did it flare up than we were struck dumb with the wonderful objects that were revealed to our gaze. The roof of the cavern just above us seemed to be about ten feet high, but grew higher as it receded into the distance, until it was lost in darkness. It seemed to be made of coral, and was supported by massive columns of the same material. Immense icicles (as they appeared to us) hung from it in various places. These, however, were formed, not of ice, but of a species of limestone, which seemed seemed to flow in a liquid form towards the point of each, where it became solid. A good many drops fell, however, to the rock below, and these formed little cones, which rose to meet the points above. Some of them had already met, and thus we saw how

the pillars were formed, which at first seemed to us as if they had been placed there by some human architect to support the roof. As we advanced farther in, we saw that the floor was composed of the same material as the pillars; and it presented the curious appearance of ripples, such as are formed on water when gently ruffled by the wind. There were several openings on either hand in the walls, that seemed to lead into other caverns; but these we did not explore at this time. We also observed that the ceiling was curiously marked in many places, as if it were the fretwork of a noble cathedral; and the walls, as well as the roof, sparkled in the light of our torch, and threw back gleams and flashes, as if they were covered with precious stones. Although we proceeded far into this cavern, we did not come to the end of it; and we were obliged to return more speedily than we would otherwise have done, as our torch was nearly expended. We did not observe any openings in the roof, or any indications of places whereby light might enter; but near the entrance to the cavern stood an immense mass of pure white coral rock which caught and threw back the little light that found an entrance through the cave's mouth, and thus produced, we conjectured, the pale-green object which had first attracted our attention. We concluded, also, that the reflecting power of this rock was that which gave forth the dim light that faintly illumined the first part of the cave.

Before diving through the passage again we extinguished the small piece of our torch that remained, and left it in a dry spot; conceiving that we might possibly stand in need of it, if at any future time we should chance to wet our torch while diving into the cavern. As we stood for a few minutes after it was out, waiting till our eyes became accustomed to the gloom, we could not help remarking the deep, intense stillness and the unutterable gloom of all around us; and, as I thought of the stupendous dome above, and the countless gems that had sparkled in the torchlight a few minutes before, it came into my mind to consider how strange it is that God should make such wonderful and exquisitely beautiful works never to be seen at all, except, indeed, by chance visitors such as ourselves.

I afterwards found that there were many such caverns among the islands of the South Seas, some of them larger and more beautiful than the one I have just described.

"Now, Ralph, are you ready?" said Jack, in a low voice, that seemed to echo up into the dome above.

"Quite ready."

"Come along, then," said he; and plunging off the ledge of the rock into the water, we dived through the narrow entrance. In a few seconds we were panting on the rocks above, and receiving the congratulations of our friend Peterkin.

CHAPTER XIV.

Strange peculiarity of the tides—Also of the twilight—Peterkin's remarkable conduct in embracing a little pig and killing a big sow—Sage remarks on jesting—Also on love.

It was quite a relief to us to breathe the pure air and to enjoy the glad sunshine after our long ramble in the Diamond Cave, as we named it; for although we did not stay more than half-an-hour

away, it seemed to us much longer. While we were dressing, and during our walk home, we did our best to satisfy the curiosity of poor Peterkin, who seemed to regret, with lively sincerity, his inability to dive.

There was no help for it, however, so we consoled with him as we best could. Had there been any great rise or fall in the tide of these seas, we might perhaps have found it possible to take him down with us at low water ; but as the tide never rose or fell more than eighteen inches or two feet, this was impossible.

This peculiarity of the tide—its slight rise and fall—had not attracted our observation till some time after our residence on the island. Neither had we observed another curious circumstance until we had been some time there. This was the fact that the tide rose and fell with constant regularity, instead of being affected by the changes of the moon as in our own country, and as it is in most other parts of the world—at least in all those parts with which I am acquainted. Every day and every night, at twelve o'clock precisely, the tide is at the full ; and at six o'clock every morning and evening it is ebb. I can speak with much confidence on this singular circumstance, as we took particular note of it, and never found it to alter. Of course, I must admit, we had to guess the hour of twelve midnight, and I think we could do this pretty correctly ; but in regard to twelve noon we are quite positive, because we easily found the highest point that the sun reached in the sky by placing ourselves at a certain spot whence we observed the sharp summit of a cliff resting against the sky, just where the sun passed.

Jack and I were surprised that we had not noticed this the first few days of our residence here, and could only account for it by our being so much taken up with the more obvious wonders of our novel situation. I have since learned, however, that this want of observation is a sad and very common infirmity of human nature, there being hundreds of persons before whose eyes the most wonderful things are passing every day, who nevertheless are totally ignorant of them. I therefore have to record my sympathy with such persons, and to recommend to them a course of conduct which I have now for a long time myself adopted—namely, the habit of forcing my attention upon *all* things that go on around me, and of taking some degree of interest in them, whether I feel it naturally or not. I suggest this the more earnestly, though humbly, because I have very frequently come to know that my indifference to a thing has generally been caused by my ignorance in regard to it.

We had much serious conversation on this subject of the tides ; and Jack told us, in his own quiet, philosophical way, that these tides did great good to the world in many ways, particularly in the way of cleansing the shores of the land, and carrying off the filth that was constantly poured into the sea therefrom ; which, Peterkin suggested, was remarkable *tidy* of it to do. Poor Peterkin could never let slip an opportunity to joke, however inopportune it might be ; which at first we found rather a disagreeable propensity, as it often interrupted the flow of very agreeable conversation—and, indeed, I cannot too strongly record my disapprobation of this tendency in general—but we became so used to it at last that we found it no interruption whatever ; indeed, strange to say, we came to feel that it was a necessary part of our enjoyment (such is the

force of habit), and found the sudden outbursts of mirth, resulting from his humorous disposition, quite natural and refreshing to us in the midst of our more serious conversations. But I must not misrepresent Peterkin. We often found, to our surprise, that he knew many things which we did not; and I also observed that those things which he learned from experience were never forgotten. From all these things I came at length to understand that things very opposite and dissimilar in themselves, when united, do make an agreeable whole; as, for example, we three on this our island, although most unlike in many things, when united, made a trio so harmonious that I question if there ever met before such an agreeable triumvirate. There was, indeed, no note of discord whatever in the symphony we played together on that sweet Coral Island; and I am now persuaded that this was owing to our having been all tuned to the same key, namely, that of *love*! Yes, we loved one another with much fervency while we lived on that island; and, for the matter of that, we love each other still.

And while I am on this subject, or rather the subject that just preceded it—namely, the tides—I may here remark on another curious natural phenomenon. We found that there was little or no twilight in this island. We had a distinct remembrance of the charming long twilight at home, which some people think the most delightful part of the day, though for my part I have always preferred sunrise; and when we first landed, we used to sit down on some rocky point or eminence, at the close of our day's work, to enjoy the evening breeze; but no sooner had the sun sunk below the horizon than all became suddenly dark. This rendered it necessary that we should watch the sun when we happened to be out hunting; for to be suddenly left in the dark while in the woods was very perplexing, as, although the stars shone with great beauty and brilliancy, they could not pierce through the thick umbrageous boughs that interlaced above our heads.

But to return; after having told all we could to Peterkin about the Diamond Cave under Spouting Cliff, as we named the locality, we were wending our way rapidly homewards, when a grunt and a squeal were born down by the land-breeze to our ears.

"That's the ticket!" was Peterkin's remarkable exclamation, as he started convulsively, and levelled his spear.

"Hist!" cried Jack; "these are your friends, Peterkin. They must have come over expressly to pay you a friendly visit, for it is the first time we have seen them on this side the island."

"Come along!" cried Peterkin, hurrying towards the wood, while Jack and I followed, smiling at his impatience.

Another grunt and half-a-dozen squeals, much louder than before, came down the valley. At this time we were just opposite the small vale which lay between the Valley of the Wreck and Spouting Cliff.

"I say, Peterkin," cried Jack, in a hoarse whisper

"Well, what is't?"

"Stay a bit, man. These grunTERS are just up there on the hill-side. If you go and stand with Ralph in the lee of yon cliff, I'll cut round behind and drive them through the gorge, so that you'll have a better chance of picking out a good one. Now, mind you pitch into a fat young pig, Peterkin," added Jack, as he sprang into the bushes.

"Won't I, just!" said Peterkin, licking his lips, as we took our station beside the cliff. "I feel quite a tender affection for young pigs in my heart. Perhaps it would be more correct to say in my s—."

"There they come!" cried I, as a terrific yell from Jack sent the whole herd screaming down the hill. Now Peterkin, being unable to hold back, crept a short way up a very steep grassy mound, in order to get a better view of the hogs before they came up; and just as he raised his head above its summit, two little pigs, which had outrun their companions, rushed over the top with the utmost precipitation. One of these brushed close past Peterkin's ear; the other, unable to arrest its headlong flight, went, as Peterkin himself afterwards expressed it, "bash" into his arms with a sudden squeal, which was caused more by the force of the blow than the will of the animal, and both of them rolled violently down to the foot of the mound. No sooner was this reached than the little pig recovered its feet, tossed up its tail, and fled shrieking from the spot. But I slung a large stone after it, which, being fortunately well aimed, hit it behind the ear, and felled it to the earth.

"Capital, Ralph! that's your sort!" cried Peterkin, who, to my surprise and great relief, had risen to his feet apparently unhurt, though much dishevelled. He rushed frantically towards the gorge, which the yells of the hogs told us they were now approaching. I had made up my mind that I would abstain from killing another, as, if Peterkin should be successful, two were more than sufficient for our wants at the present time. Suddenly they all burst forth—two or three little round ones in advance, and an enormous old sow with a drove of hogs at her heels.

"Now, Peterkin," said I, "there's a nice little fat one; just spear it."

But Peterkin did not move; he allowed it to pass unharmed. I looked at him in surprise, and saw that his lips were compressed and his eyebrows knitted, as if he were about to fight with some awful enemy.

"What is it?" I inquired, with some trepidation.

Suddenly he levelled his spear, darted forward, and, with a yell that nearly froze the blood in my veins, stabbed the old sow to the heart. Nay, so vigorously was it done that the spear went in at one side and came out at the other!

"O Peterkin!" said I, going up to him, "what have you done?"

"Done? I've killed their great-great-grandmother, that's all," said he, looking with a somewhat avestruck expression at the transfixed animal.

"Hallo! what's this?" said Jack, as he came up. "Why, Peterkin, you must be fond of a tough chop. If you mean to eat this old hog, she'll try your jaws, I warrant. What possessed you to stick *her*, Peterkin?"

"Why, the fact is I want a pair of shoes."

"What have your shoes to do with the old hog?" said I, smiling.

"My present shoes have certainly nothing to do with her," replied Peterkin; "nevertheless, she will have a good deal to do with my future shoes. The fact is, when I saw you floor that pig so neatly, Ralph, it struck me that there was little use in killing another. Then I remembered all at once that I had long wanted some leather

or tough substance to make shoes of, and this old grand-mother seemed so tough that I just made up my mind to stick her, and you see I've done it!"

"That you certainly have, Peterkin," said Jack, as he was examining the transfixed animal.

We now considered how we were to carry our game home, for, although the distance was short, the hog was very heavy. At length we hit on the plan of tying its four feet together, and passing the spear handle between them. Jack took one end on his shoulder, I took the other on mine, and Peterkin carried the small pig.

Thus we returned in triumph to our bower, laden, as Peterkin remarked, with the glorious spoils of a noble hunt. As he afterwards spoke in similarly glowing terms in reference to the supper that followed, there is every reason to believe that we retired that night to our leafy beds in a high state of satisfaction.

CHAPTER XV.

Boat-building extraordinary—Peterkin tries his hand at cookery and fails most signally—The boat finished—Curious conversation with the cat, and other matters.

FOR many days after this Jack applied himself with unremitting assiduity to the construction of our boat, which at length began to look somewhat like one. But those only who have had the thing to do can entertain the right idea of the difficulty involved in such an undertaking, with no other implements than an axe, a bit of hoop-iron, a sail-needle, and a broken pen-knife. But Jack did it. He was of that disposition which *will* not be conquered. When he believed himself to be acting rightly, he overcame all obstacles. I have seen Jack, when doubtful whether what he was about to do were right or wrong, as timid and vacillating as a little girl; and I honour him for it!

As this boat was a curiosity in its way, a few words here relative to the manner of its construction may not be amiss.

I have already mentioned the chestnut tree with its wonderful buttresses or planks. This tree, then, furnished us with the chief part of our material. First of all, Jack sought out a limb of a tree of such a form and size as, while it should form the keel, a bend at either end should form the stem and stern posts. Such a piece, however, was not easy to obtain; but at last he procured it, by rooting up a small tree which had a branch growing at the proper angle about ten feet up its stem, with two strong roots growing in such a form as enabled him to make a flat-sterned boat. This placed, he procured three branching roots of suitable size, which he fitted to the keel at equal distances, thus forming three strong ribs. Now the squaring and shaping of these, and the cutting of the grooves in the keel, was an easy enough matter, as it was all work for the axe, in the use of which Jack was become wonderfully expert; but it was quite a different affair when he came to nailing the ribs to the keel, for we had no instrument capable of boring a large hole, and no nails to fasten them with. We were, indeed, much perplexed here; but Jack at length devised an instrument that served very well. He took the remainder of our hoop-iron and beat it into the form

of a pipe or cylinder, about as thick as a man's finger. This he did by means of our axe and the old rusty axe we had found at the house of the poor man at the other side of the island. This when made red hot, bored slowly through the timbers; and, the better to retain the heat, Jack shut up one end of it and filled it with sand. True, the work was very slowly done, but it mattered not, we had little else to do. Two holes were bored in each timber, about an inch and a half apart, and also down into the keel, but not quite through. Into these were placed stout pegs made of a tree called iron-wood; and, when they were hammered well home, the timbers were as firmly fixed as if they had been nailed with iron. The gunwales, which were very stout, were fixed in a similar manner. But, besides the wooden nails, they were firmly lashed to the stem and stern posts and ribs by means of a species of cordage which we had contrived to make out of the fibrous husk of the cocoa nut. This husk was very tough, and when a number of the threads were joined together they formed excellent cordage. At first we tied the different lengths together; but this was such a clumsy and awkward complication of knots that we contrived, by careful interlacing of the ends together before twisting, to make good cordage of any size or length we choose. Of course it cost us much time and infinite labour, but Jack kept up our spirits when we grew weary, and so all that we required was at last constructed.

Planks were now cut off the chestnut trees of about an inch thick. These were dressed with the axe—but clumsily, for an axe is ill adapted for such work. Five of these planks on each side were sufficient; and we formed the boat in a very rounded, barrel-like shape, in order to have as little twisting of the planks as possible, for although we could easily bend them, we could not easily twist them. Having no nails to rivet the planks with, we threw aside the ordinary fashion of boat-building and adopted one of our own. The planks were therefore placed on each other's edges, and sewed together with the tough cordage already mentioned. They were also thus sewed to the stem, the stern, and the keel. Each stitch or tie was six inches apart, and was formed thus:—Three holes were bored in the upper plank and three in the lower—the holes being above each other, that is, in a vertical line. Through these holes the cord was passed, and, when tied, formed a powerful stitch of three ply. Besides this, we placed between the edges of the planks layers of cocoa-nut fibre, which, as it swelled when wetted, would, we hoped, make our little vessel water-tight. But in order further to secure this end, we collected a large quantity of pitch from the bread-fruit tree, with which, when boiled in our old iron pot, we paid the whole of the inside of the boat, and, while it was yet hot, placed large pieces of cocoa-nut cloth on it, and then gave it another coat above that. Thus the interior was covered with a tough water-tight material; while the exterior, being uncovered and so exposed to the swelling action of the water, was, we hoped, likely to keep the boat quite dry. I may add that our hopes were not disappointed.

While Jack was thus engaged, Peterkin and I sometimes assisted him; but as our assistance was not much required, we more frequently went a-hunting on the extensive mud-flats at the entrance of the long valley which lay nearest to our bower. Here we found large flocks of ducks of various kinds, some of them bearing so much

resemblance to the wild ducks of our own country that I think they must have been the same. On these occasions we took the bow and the sling, with both of which we were often successful, though I must confess that I was the least so. Our suppers were thus pleasantly varied, and sometimes we had such a profusion spread out before us that we frequently knew not with which of the dainties to begin.

I must also add that the poor old cat which we had brought home had always a liberal share of our good things, and so well was it looked after, especially by Peterkin, that it recovered much of its former strength, and seemed to improve in sight as well as hearing.

The large flat stone, or rock of coral, which stood just in front of the entrance to our bower, was our table. On this rock we had spread out the few articles we possessed the day we were shipwrecked; and on the same rock during many a day afterwards, we spread out the bountiful supply with which we had been blessed on our Coral Island. Sometimes we sat down at this table to a feast consisting of hot rolls—as Peterkin called the newly-baked bread-fruit—a roast pig, roast duck, boiled and roasted yams, cocoa-nuts, taro, and sweet potatoes; which we followed up with a dessert of plums, apples, and plantains—the last being a large-sized and delightful fruit, which grew on a large shrub or tree not more than twelve feet high, with light-green leaves of enormous length and breadth. These luxurious feasts were usually washed down with cocoa-nut lemonade.

Occasionally Peterkin tried to devise some new dish—"a conglomerate," as he used to say; but these generally turned out such atrocious compounds that he was ultimately induced to give up his attempts in extreme disgust—not forgetting, however, to point out to Jack that his failure was a direct contradiction to the proverb which he, Jack, was constantly thrusting down his throat—namely, that "where's there's a will there's a way." For he had a great will to become a cook, but could by no means find a way to accomplish that end.

One day, while Peterkin and I were seated beside our table on which dinner was spread, Jack came up from the beach, and, flinging down his axe, exclaimed,—

"There, lads, the boat's finished at last! so we've nothing to do now but shape two pair of oars, and then we may put to sea as soon as we like."

This piece of news threw us into a state of great joy; for although we were aware that the boat had been gradually getting near its completion, it had taken so long that we did not expect it to be quite ready for at least two or three weeks. But Jack had wrought hard and said nothing in order to surprise us.

"My dear fellow," cried Peterkin, "you're a perfect trump. But why did you not tell us it was so nearly ready? Won't we have a jolly sail to-morrow, eh?"

"Don't talk so much, Peterkin," said Jack; "and, pray, hand me a bit of that pig."

"Certainly, my dear," cried Peterkin, seizing the axe. "What part will you have? a leg, or a wing, or a piece of the breast—which!"

"A hind leg, if you please," answered Jack; "and, pray, be so good as to include the tail."

"With all my heart," said Peterkin, exchanging the axe for his hoop-iron knife, with which he cut off the desired portion. "I'm only too glad, my dear boy, to see that your appetite is so wholesale, and there's no chance whatever of its dwindling down into re-tail again, at least in so far as this pig is concerned.—Ralph, lad, why don't you laugh, eh?" he added, turning suddenly to me with a severe look of inquiry.

"Laugh!" said I; "what at, Peterkin? Why should I laugh?"

Both Jack and Peterkin answered this inquiry by themselves laughing so immoderately that I was induced to believe I had missed noticing some good joke, so I begged that it might be explained to me; but as this only produced repeated roars of laughter, I smiled and helped myself to another slice of plantain.

"Well, but," continued Peterkin, "I was talking of a sail to-morrow. Can't we have one, Jack?"

"No," replied Jack, "we can't have a sail, but I hope we shall have a row, as I intend to work hard at the oars this afternoon, and, if we can't get them finished by sunset, we'll light our candle-nuts, and turn them out of hands before we turn into bed."

"Very good," said Peterkin, tossing a lump of pork to the cat, who received it with a mew of satisfaction. "I'll help you, if I can."

"Afterwards," continued Jack, "we will make a sail out of the cocoa-nut cloth, and rig up a mast, and then we shall be able to sail to some of the other islands, and visit our old friends the penguins."

The prospect of being so soon in a position to extend our observations to the other islands and enjoy a sail over the beautiful sea afforded us much delight, and after dinner we set about making the oars in good earnest. Jack went into the woods and blocked them roughly out with the axe, and I smoothed them down with the knife, while Peterkin remained in the bower spinning, or rather twisting, some strong thick cordage with which to fasten them to the boat.

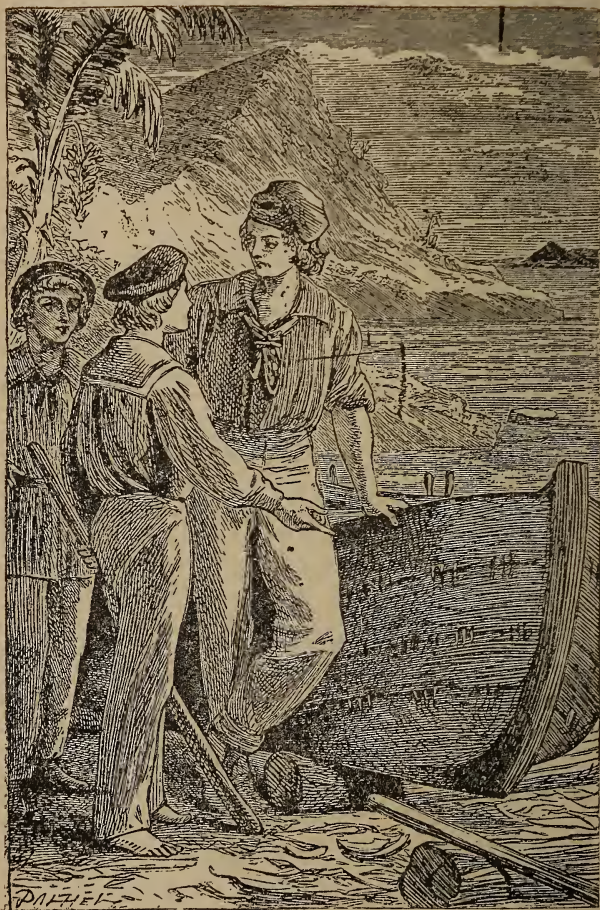
We worked hard and rapidly, so that when the sun went down Jack and I returned to the bower with four stout oars, which required little to be done to them save a slight degree of polishing with the knife. As we drew near we were suddenly arrested by the sound of a voice. We were not a little surprised at this—indeed I may almost say alarmed—for, although Peterkin was undoubtedly fond of talking, we had never up to this time found him talking to himself. We listened intently, and still heard the sound of a voice, as if in conversation. Jack motioned me to be silent, and, advancing to the bower on tiptoe, we peeped in.

The sight that met our gaze was certainly not a little amusing. On the top of a log which we sometimes used as a table sat the black cat, with a very demure expression on its countenance, and in front of it, sitting on the ground with his legs extended on either side of the log, was Peterkin. At the moment we saw him he was gazing intently into the cat's face, with his nose about four inches from it, his hands being thrust into his breeches pockets.

"Cat," said Peterkin, turning his head a little on one side, "I love you!"

There was a pause, as if Peterkin awaited a reply to this affectionate declaration. But the cat said nothing.

"Do you hear me?" cried Peterkin sharply. "I love you—I do. Don't you love me?"



Leaving for the Mud Flats.

To this touching appeal the cat said "Mew" faintly.

"Ah! that's right. You're a jolly old rascal. Why did you not speak at once, eh?" and Peterkin put forward his mouth and kissed the cat on the nose!

"Yes," continued Peterkin, after a pause, "I love you. D'you think I'd say so if I didn't, you black villain? I love you because I've got to take care of you, and to look after you, and to think about you, and to see that you don't die—"

"Mew, me-a-w!" said the cat.

"Very good," continued Peterkin; "quite true, I have no doubt; but you've no right to interrupt me, sir. Hold your tongue till I have done speaking. Moreover, cat, I love you because you came to me the first time you ever saw me, and didn't seem to be afraid, and appeared to be fond of me, though you didn't know that I wasn't going to kill you. Now that was brave, that was bold, and very jolly, old boy, and I love you for it—I do!"

Again there was a pause of a few minutes, during which the cat looked placid, and Peterkin dropped his eyes upon its toes as if in contemplation. Suddenly he looked up.

"Well, cat, what are you thinking about now? won't speak, eh? Now tell me, don't you think it's a monstrous shame that these two scoundrels, Jack and Ralph, should keep us waiting for our supper so long?"

Here the cat arose, put up its back and stretched itself, yawned slightly, and licked the point of Peterkin's nose!

"Just so, old boy; you're a clever fellow. I really do believe the brute understands me!" said Peterkin, while a broad grin overspread his face as he drew back and surveyed the cat.

At this point Jack burst into a loud fit of laughter. The cat uttered an angry fuff and fled, while Peterkin sprang up and exclaimed,—

"Bad luck to you, Jack; you've nearly made the heart jump out of my body, you have."

"Perhaps I have," replied Jack, laughing, as we entered the bower, "but as I don't intend to keep you or the cat any longer from your supper, I hope that you'll both forgive me."

Peterkin endeavoured to turn this affair off with a laugh, but I observed that he blushed very deeply at the time we discovered ourselves, and he did not seem to relish any allusion to the subject afterwards; so we refrained from remarking on it ever after, though it tickled us not a little at the time.

After supper we retired to rest and to dream of wonderful adventures in our little boat and distant voyages upon the sea.

CHAPTER XVI.

The boat launched—We visit the coral reef—The great breaker that never goes down—Coral insects—The way in which coral islands are made—The boat's sail—We tax our ingenuity to form fish hooks—Some of the fish we saw—And a monstrous whale—Wonderful shower of little fish—Water-spouts.

It was a bright, clear, beautiful morning when we first launched our little boat and rowed out upon the placid waters of the lagoon. Not a breath of wind ruffled the surface of the deep. Not a cloud spotted

the deep blue sky. Not a sound that was discordant broke the stillness of the morning, although there were many sounds, sweet, tiny, and melodious, that mingled in the universal harmony of nature. The sun was just rising from the Pacific's ample bosom and tipping the mountain tops with a red glow. The sea was shining like a sheet of glass, yet heaving with the long deep swell that, all the world round, indicates the life of ocean; and the bright sea-weeds and the brilliant corals shone in the depths of that pellucid water, as we rowed over it, like rare and precious gems. Oh! it was a sight fitted to stir the soul of man to its profoundest depths, and, if he owned a heart at all, to lift that heart in adoration and gratitude to the great Creator of this magnificent and glorious universe.

At first, in the strength of our delight, we rowed hither and thither without aim or object. But after the effervescence of our spirits was abated, we began to look about us and to consider what we should do.

"I vote that we row to the reef," cried Peterkin.

"And I vote that we visit the islands within the lagoon," said I.

"And I vote we do both," cried Jack; "so pull away, boys."

As I have already said, we had made four oars, but our boat was so small that only two were necessary. The extra pair were reserved in case any accident should happen to the others. It was therefore only needful that two of us should row, while the third steered, by means of an oar, and relieved the rowers occasionally.

First we landed on one of the small islands and ran all over it, but saw nothing worthy of particular notice. Then we landed on a larger island, on which were growing a few cocoa-nut trees. Not having eaten anything that morning, we gathered a few of the nuts and breakfasted. After this we pulled straight out to sea and landed on the coral reef.

This was indeed a novel and interesting sight to us. We had now been so long on shore that we had almost forgotten the appearance of breakers, for there were none within the lagoon; but now, as we stood beside the foam-crested billow of the open sea, all the enthusiasm of the sailor was awakened in our breasts, and as we gazed on the widespread ruin of that single magnificent breaker that burst in thunder at our feet, we forgot the Coral Island behind us; we forgot our bower and the calm repose of the scented woods; we forgot all that had passed during the last few months, and remembered nothing but the storms, the calms, the fresh breezes and the surging billows of the open sea.

This huge, ceaseless breaker, to which I have so often alluded, was a much larger and more sublime object than we had at all imagined it to be. It rose many yards above the level of the sea, and could be seen approaching at some distance from the reef. Slowly and majestically it came on, acquiring greater volume and velocity as it advanced, until it assumed the form of a clear watery arch, which sparkled in the bright sun. On it came with resistless and solemn majesty—the upper edge lipped gently over, and it fell with a roar that seemed as though the heart of Ocean were broken in the crash of tumultuous water, while the foam-clad coral reef appeared to tremble beneath the mighty shock!

We gazed long and wonderingly at this great sight, and it was with difficulty we could tear ourselves away from it. As I have once before mentioned, this wave broke in many places over the reef and

scattered some of its spray into the lagoon, but in most places the reef was sufficiently broad and elevated to receive and check its entire force. In many places the coral rocks were covered with vegetation—the beginning, as it appeared to us, of future islands. Thus, on this reef, we came to perceive how most of the small islands of those seas are formed. On one part we saw the spray of the breaker washing over the rocks, and millions of little, active, busy creatures continuing the work of building up this living rampart. At another place, which was just a little too high for the waves to wash over it, the coral insects were all dead; for we found that they never did their work above water. They had faithfully completed the mighty work which their Creator had given them to do, and they were now all dead. Again, in other spots the ceaseless lashing of the sea had broken the dead coral in pieces, and cast it up in the form of sand. Here sea-birds had alighted, little pieces of sea-weed and stray bits of wood had been washed up, seeds of plants had been carried by the wind, and a few lovely blades of bright green had already sprung up, which, when they died, would increase the size and fertility of these emeralds of Ocean. At other places these islets had grown apace, and were shaded by one or two cocoa-nut trees, which grew, literally, in the sand, and were constantly washed by the ocean-spray; yet, as I have before remarked, their fruit was most refreshing and sweet to our taste.

Again at this time Jack and I pondered the formation of the large coral islands. We could now understand how the low ones were formed; but the larger islands cost us much consideration, yet we could arrive at no certain conclusion on the subject.

Having satisfied our curiosity and enjoyed ourselves during the whole day, in our little boat, we returned, somewhat wearied, and, withal, rather hungry, to our bower.

"Now," said Jack, "as our boat answers so well, we will get a mast and sail made immediately."

"So we will," cried Peterkin, as we all assisted to drag the boat above high-water mark; we'll light our candle and set about it this very night. Hurrah, my boys, pull away!"

As we dragged our boat, we observed that she grated heavily on her keel, and as the sands were in this place mingled with broken coral rocks, we saw portions of the wood being scraped off.

"Hallo!" cried Jack, on seeing this; "that won't do. Our keel will be worn off in no time at this rate."

"So it will," said I, pondering deeply as to how this might be prevented. But I am not of a mechanical turn naturally, so I could conceive no remedy save that of putting a plate of iron on the keel; but as we had no iron, I knew not what was to be done. "It seems to me, Jack," I added, "that it is impossible to prevent the keel being worn off thus."

"Impossible!" cried Peterkin. "My dear Ralph, you are mistaken; there is nothing so easy."

"How?" I inquired, in some surprise.

"Why, by not using the boat at all!" replied Peterkin.

"Hold your impudent tongue, Peterkin," said Jack, as he shouldered the oars; "come along with me and I'll give you work to do. In the first place, you will go and collect cocoa-nut fibre, and set to work to make sewing twine with it—"

"Please, captain," interrupted Peterkin, "I've got lots of it made already—more than enough, as a little friend of mine used to be in the habit of saying every day after dinner."

"Very well," continued Jack; "then you'll help Ralph to collect cocoa-nut cloth, and cut it into shape, after which we'll make a sail of it. I'll see to getting the mast and the gearing; so let's to work."

And to work we went right busily, so that in three days from that time we had set up a mast and sail, with the necessary rigging, in our little boat. The sail was not, indeed, very handsome to look at, as it was formed of a number of oblong patches of cloth; but we had sewed it well by means of our sail-needle, so that it was strong, which was the chief point. Jack had also overcome the difficulty about the keel, by pinning to it a *false keel*. This was a piece of tough wood, of the same length and width as the real keel, and about five inches deep. He made it of this depth because the boat would be thereby rendered not only much more safe, but more able to beat against the wind; which, in a sea where the trade-winds blow so long and so steadily in one direction, was a matter of great importance. This piece of wood was pegged very firmly to the keel; and we now launched our boat with the satisfaction of knowing that when the false keel should be scraped off we could easily put on another; whereas, should the real keel have been scraped away, we could not have renewed it without taking our boat to pieces, which Peterkin said made his "marrow quake to think upon."

The mast and sail answered excellently, and we now sailed about in the lagoon with great delight, and examined with much interest the appearance of our island from a distance. Also, we gazed into the depths of the water, and watched for hours the gambols of the curious and bright coloured fish among the corals and sea-weed. Peterkin also made a fishing-line, and Jack constructed a number of hooks, some of which were very good, others remarkably bad. Some of these hooks were made of iron-wood, which did pretty well, the wood being extremely hard, and Jack made them very thick and large. Fish there are not particular. Some of the crooked bones in fish-heads also answered for this purpose pretty well. But that which formed our best and most serviceable hook was the brass finger-ring belonging to Jack. It gave him not a little trouble to manufacture it. First he cut it with the axe, then twisted it into the form of a hook. The barb took him several hours to cut. He did it by means of constant sawing with the broken pen-knife. As for the point, an hour's rubbing on a piece of sandstone made an excellent one.

It would be a matter of much time and labour to describe the appearance of the multitudes of fish that were day after day drawn into our boat by means of the brass hook. Peterkin always caught them—for we observed that he derived much pleasure from fishing—while Jack and I found ample amusement in looking on, also in gazing down at the coral groves, and in baiting the hook. Among the fish that we saw, but did not catch, were porpoises and sword-fish, whales and sharks. The porpoises came frequently into our lagoon in shoals, and amused us not a little by their bold leaps into the air and their playful gambols in the sea. The sword-fish were wonderful creatures; some of them apparently ten feet in length, with an ivory spear six or eight feet long projecting from their

noses. We often saw them darting after other fish, and no doubt they sometimes killed them with their ivory swords. Jack remembered having heard once of a sword-fish attacking a ship—which seemed strange indeed; but, as they are often in the habit of attacking whales, perhaps it mistook the ship for one. This sword-fish ran against the vessel with such force that it drove its sword quite through the thick planks, and when the ship arrived in harbour, long afterwards, the sword was found still sticking in it!

Sharks did not often appear, but we took care never again to bathe in deep water without leaving one of our number in the boat to give us warning, if he should see a shark approaching. As for the whales, they never came into our lagoon, but we frequently saw them spouting in the deep water beyond the reef. I shall never forget my surprise the first day I saw one of these huge monsters close to me. We had been rambling about on the reef during the morning, and were about to re-embark in our little boat, to return home, when a loud blowing sound caused us to wheel rapidly round. We were just in time to see a shower of spray falling, and the flukes or tail of some monstrous fish disappear in the sea a few hundred yards off. We waited some time to see if he would rise again. As we stood, the sea seemed to open up at our very feet; an immense spout of water was sent with a snort high into the air, and the huge blunt head of a sperm whale rose before us. It was so large that it could easily have taken our little boat, along with ourselves, into its mouth! It plunged slowly back into the sea, like a large ship foundering, and struck the water with its tail so forcibly as to cause a sound like a cannon shot.

We also saw a great number of flying fish, although we caught none; and we noticed that they never flew out of the water except when followed by their bitter foe the dolphin, from whom they thus endeavoured to escape. But of all the fish that we saw, none surprised us so much as those that we used to find in shallow pools after a shower of rain; and this not on account of their appearance, for they were ordinary-looking and very small, but on account of their having descended in a shower of rain! We could account for them in no other way, because the pools in which we found these fish were quite dry before the shower, and at some distance above high-water mark. Jack, however, suggested a cause which seemed to me very probable. We used often to see water-spouts in the sea. A water-spout is a whirling body of water, which rises from the sea like a sharp-pointed pillar. After rising a good way, it is met by a long tongue, which comes down from the clouds; and when the two have joined, they look something like an hour-glass. The water-spout is then carried by the wind, sometimes gently, sometimes with violence, over the sea, sometimes up into the clouds, and then, bursting asunder, it descends in a deluge. This often happens over the land as well as over the sea; and it sometimes does much damage, but frequently it passes gently away. Now, Jack thought that the little fish might perhaps have been carried up in a water-spout, and so sent down again in a shower of rain. But we could not be certain as to this point, yet we thought it likely.

During these delightful fishing and boating excursions we caught a good many eels, which we found to be very good to eat. We also found turtles among the coral rocks, and made excellent soup in our

iron kettle. Moreover, we discovered many shrimps and prawns, so that we had no lack of variety in our food ; and, indeed, we never passed a week without making some new and interesting discovery of some sort or other, either on the land or in the sea.

CHAPTER XVII.

A monster wave and its consequences—The boat lost and found—Peterkin's terrible accident—Supplies of food for a voyage in the boat—We visit Penguin Island, and are amazed beyond measure—Account of the penguins.

ONE day, not long after our little boat was finished, we were sitting on the rocks at Spouting Cliff, and talking of an excursion which we intended to make to Penguin Island the next day.

"You see," said Peterkin, "it might be all very well for a stupid fellow like me to remain here and leave the penguins alone, but it would be quite inconsistent with your characters as philosophers to remain any longer in ignorance of the habits and customs of these birds ; so the sooner we go the better."

"Very true," said I ; "there is nothing I desire so much as to have a closer inspection of them."

"And I think," said Jack, "that you had better remain at home, Peterkin, to take care of the cat ; for I am sure the hogs will be at it in your absence, out of revenge for your killing their great-grand-mother so recklessly."

"Stay at home !" cried Peterkin. "My dear fellow, you would certainly lose your way, or get upset, if I were not there to take care of you."

"Ah true," said Jack gravely ; "that did not occur to me ; no doubt you must go. Our boat does require a good deal of ballast ; and all that you say, Peterkin, carries so much weight with it, that we won't need stones if you go."

Now, while my companions were talking, a notable event occurred, which, as it is not generally known, I shall be particular in recording here.

While we were talking, as I have said, we noticed a dark line, like a low cloud or fog-bank, on the seaward horizon. The day was a fine one, though cloudy, and a gentle breeze was blowing, but the sea was not rougher or the breaker on the reef higher than usual. At first we thought that this looked like a thunder-cloud, and as we had had a good deal of broken weather of late, accompanied by occasional peals of thunder, we supposed that a storm must be approaching. Gradually, however, this line seemed to draw nearer without spreading up over the sky, as would certainly have been the case if it had been a storm-cloud. Still nearer it came, and soon we saw that it was moving swiftly towards the island, but there was no sound till it reached the islands out at sea. As it passed these islands, we observed, with no little anxiety, that a cloud of white foam encircled them, and burst in spray into the air : it was accompanied by a loud roar. This led us to conjecture that the approaching object was an enormous wave of the sea ; but we had no idea how large it was till it came near to ourselves. When it approached the outer reef, however, we were awe-struck with its unusual magnitude ; and we

sprang to our feet, and clambered hastily up to the highest point of the precipice, under an indefinable feeling of fear.

I have said before that the reef opposite Spouting Cliff was very near to the shore, while, just in front of the bower, it was at a considerable distance out to sea. Owing to this formation, the wave reached the reef at the latter point before it struck at the foot of Spouting Cliff. The instant it touched the reef we became aware, for the first time, of its awful magnitude. It burst completely over the reef at all points, with a roar that seemed louder to me than thunder; and this roar continued for some seconds, while the wave rolled gradually along towards the cliff on which we stood. As its crest reared before us, we felt that we were in great danger, and turned to flee; but we were too late. With a crash that seemed to shake the solid rock the gigantic billow fell, and instantly the spouting-holes sent up a gush of water-spouts with such force that they shrieked on issuing from their narrow vents. It seemed to us as if the earth had been blown up with water. We were stunned and confused by the shock, and so drenched and blinded with spray that we knew not for a few moments whither to flee for shelter. At length we all three gained an eminence beyond reach of the water; but what a scene of devastation met our gaze as we looked along the shore! This enormous wave not only burst over the reef, but continued its way across the lagoon, and fell on the sandy beach of the island with such force that it passed completely over it and dashed into the woods, levelling the smaller trees and bushes in its headlong course.

On seeing this, Jack said he feared our bower must have been swept away, and that the boat, which was on the beach, must have been utterly destroyed. Our hearts sank within us as we thought of this, and we hastened round through the woods towards our home. On reaching it we found, to our great relief of mind, that the force of the wave had been expanded just before reaching the bower; but the entrance to it was almost blocked up by the torn-up bushes and tangled heaps of sea-weed. Having satisfied ourselves as to the bower, we hurried to the spot where the boat had been left; but no boat was there. The spot on which it had stood was vacant, and no sign of it could we see on looking around us.

"It may have been washed up into the woods," said Jack, hurrying up the beach as he spoke. Still no boat was to be seen, and we were about to give ourselves over to despair, when Peterkin called to Jack and said,—

"Jack, my friend, you were once so exceedingly sagacious and wise as to make me acquainted with the fact that cocoa-nuts grow upon trees; will you now be so good as to inform me what sort of fruit that is growing on the top of yonder bush? for I confess to be ignorant, or at least, doubtful on the point."

We looked towards the bush indicated, and there, to our surprise, beheld our little boat snugly nestled among the leaves. We were very much overjoyed at this, for we would have suffered any loss rather than the loss of our boat. We found that the wave had actually borne the boat on its crest from the beach into the woods, and there launched it into the heart of this bush; which was extremely fortunate, for had it been tossed against a rock or a tree, it would have been dashed to pieces, whereas it had not received the smallest injury. It was no easy matter, however, to get it out of the

bush and down to the sea again. This cost us two days of hard labour to accomplish.

We had also much ado to clear away the rubbish from before the bower, and spent nearly a week in constant labour ere we got the neighbourhood to look as clean and orderly as before; for the uprooted bushes and sea-weed that lay on the beach formed a more dreadfully confused-looking mass than one who had not seen the place before the inundation could conceive.

Before leaving the subject I may mention, for the sake of those who interest themselves in the curious natural phenomena of our world, that this gigantic wave occurs regularly on some of the islands of the Pacific once and sometimes twice in the year. I heard this stated by the missionaries during my career in those seas. They could not tell me whether it visited all of the islands, but I was certainly assured that it occurred periodically in some of them.

After we had got our home put to rights and cleared of the *debris* of the inundation, we again turned our thoughts to paying the penguins a visit. The boat was therefore overhauled and a few repairs done. Then we prepared a supply of provisions, for we intended to be absent at least a night or two, perhaps longer. This took us some time to do, for while Jack was busy with the boat, Peterkin was sent into the woods to spear a hog or two, and had to search long, sometimes ere he found them. Peterkin was usually sent on this errand when we wanted a pork chop (which was not seldom), because he was so active and could run so wonderfully fast that he found no difficulty in overtaking the hogs; but being dreadfully reckless, he almost invariably tumbled over stumps and stones in the course of his wild chase, and seldom returned home without having knocked the skin off his shins. Once, indeed, a more serious accident happened to him. He had been out all morning alone, and did not return at the usual time to dinner. We wondered at this, for Peterkin was always very punctual at the dinner-hour. As supper-time drew near we began to be anxious about him, and at length sallied forth to search the woods. For a long time we sought in vain, but a little before dark we came upon the tracks of the hogs, which we followed up until we came to the brow of a rather steep bank or precipice. Looking over this we beheld Peterkin lying in a state of insensibility at the foot, with his cheek resting on the snout of a little pig, which was pinned to the earth by the spear. We were dreadfully alarmed, but hastened to bathe his forehead with water, and had soon the satisfaction of seeing him revive. After we had carried him home he related to us how the thing had happened.

"You must know," said he, "I walked about all the forenoon, till I was as tired as an old donkey, without seeing a single grunter, not so much as a track of one; but as I was determined not to return empty-handed, I resolved to go without my dinner, and—"

"What!" exclaimed Jack, "did you *really* resolve to do that?"

"Now Jack, hold your tongue," returned Peterkin. "I said that I resolved to forego my dinner and to push to the head of the small valley, where I felt pretty sure of discovering the hogs. I soon found that I was on the right scent, for I had scarcely walked half-a-mile in the direction of the small plum tree we found there the other day, when a squeak fell on my ear. 'Ho, ho,' said I, 'there you go, my boys;' and I hurried up the glen. I soon started them, and singling

out a fat pig, ran tilt at him. In a few seconds I was up with him, and stuck my spear right through his dumpy body. Just as I did so, I saw that we were on the edge of a precipice, whether high or low I knew not ; but I had been running at such a pace that I could not stop, so the pig and I gave a howl in concert and went plunging over together. I remembered nothing more after that, till I came to my senses and found you bathing my temples, and Ralph wringing his hands over me."

But although Peterkin was often unfortunate in the way of getting tumbles, he was successful on the present occasion in hunting, and returned before evening with three very nice little hogs. I also was successful in my visit to the mud-flats, where I killed several ducks. So that, when we launched and loaded our boat at sunrise the following morning, we found our store of provisions to be more than sufficient. Part had been cooked the night before, and on taking note of the different items, we found the account to stand thus :—

10 Bread-fruits (two baked, eight unbaked).

20 Yams (six roasted, the rest raw).

6 Taro roots.

50 Fine large plums.

6 Cocoa nuts, ripe.

6 Ditto green (for drinking).

4 Large ducks and two small ones, raw.

3 Cold roast pigs, with stuffing.

I may here remark that the stuffing had been devised by Peterkin specially for the occasion. He kept the manner of his compounding a profound secret, so I cannot tell what it was ; but I can say, with much confidence, that we found it to be atrociously bad, and, after the first tasting, scraped it carefully out and threw it overboard. We calculated that this supply would last us for several days ; but we afterwards found that it was much more than we required, especially in regard to the cocoa nuts, of which we found large supplies wherever we went. However, as Peterkin remarked, it was better to have too much than too little, as we knew not to what straits we might be put during our voyage.

It was a very calm sunny morning when we launched forth and rowed over the lagoon towards the outlet in the reef, and passed between the two green islets that guarded the entrance. We experienced some difficulty and no little danger in passing the surf of the breaker, and shipped a good deal of water in the attempt ; but, once past the billow, we found ourselves floating placidly on the long oily swell that rose and fell slowly as it rolled over the wide ocean.

Penguin Island lay on the other side of our own island, at about a mile beyond the outer reef, and we calculated that it must be at least twenty miles distant by the way we should have to go. We might, indeed, have shortened the way by coasting round our island inside of the lagoon, and going out at the passage in the reef nearly opposite to Penguin Island ; but we preferred to go by the open sea—first, because it was more adventurous, and, secondly because we should have the pleasure of again feeling the motion of the deep, which we all loved very much, not being liable to sea-sickness.

"I wish we had a breeze," said Jack.

"So do I," cried Peterkin, resting on his oar and wiping his heated

brow ; "pulling is hard work. Oh dear, if we could only catch a hundred or two of these gulls, tie them to the boat with long strings and make them fly as we want them, how capital it would be !"

"Or bore a hole through a shark's tail, and reeve a rope through it, eh ?" remarked Jack. "But, I say, it seems that my wish is going to be granted, for here comes a breeze. Ship your oar, Peterkin. Up with the mast, Ralph ; I'll see to the sail. Mind your helm ; look out for squalls !"

This last speech was caused by the sudden appearance of a dark-blue line on the horizon, which, in an incredibly short space of time, swept down on us, lashing up the sea in white foam as it went. We presented the stern of the boat to its first violence, and, in a few seconds, it moderated into a steady breeze, to which we spread our sail and flew merrily over the waves. Although the breeze died away soon afterwards, it had been so stiff while it lasted that we were carried over the greater part of our way before it fell calm again ; so that, when the flapping of the sail against the mast told us that it was time to resume the oars, we were not much more than a mile from Penguin Island.

"There go the soldiers !" cried Peterkin, as we came in sight of it ; "how spruce their white trousers look this morning ! I wonder if they will receive us kindly. D'you think they are hospitable, Jack ?"

"Don't talk, Peterkin, but pull away, and you shall see shortly."

As we drew near to the island we were much amused by the manœuvres and appearances of these strange birds. They seemed to be of different species, for some had crests on their heads while others had none, and while some were about the size of a goose others appeared nearly as large as a swan. We also saw a huge albatross soaring above the heads of the penguins. It was followed and surrounded by numerous flocks of sea-gulls. Having approached to within a few yards of the island, which was a low rock, with no other vegetation on it than a few bushes, we lay on our oars and gazed at the birds with surprise and pleasure, they returning our gaze with interest. We now saw that their soldier-like appearance was owing to the stiff, erect manner in which they sat on their short legs—"bolt-upright," as Peterkin expressed it. They had black heads, long sharp beaks, white breasts, and bluish backs. Their wings were so short that they looked more like the fins of a fish, and, indeed, we soon saw that they used them for the purpose of swimming under water. There were no quills on their wings, but a sort of scaly feathers ; which also thickly covered their bodies. Their legs were short, and placed so far back that the birds, while on land, were obliged to stand quite upright in order to keep their balance ; but in the water they floated like other water-fowl. At first we were so stunned with the clamour which they and other sea-birds kept up around us, that we knew not which way to look—for they covered the rocks in thousands ; but, as we continued to gaze, we observed several quadrupeds (as we thought) walking in the midst of the penguins.

"Pull in a bit," cried Peterkin, "and let's see what these are. They must be fond of noisy company, to consort with such creatures."

To our surprise we found that these were no other than penguins which had gone down on all fours, and were crawling among the bushes on their feet and wings, just like quadrupeds. Suddenly one big old bird, that had been sitting on a point very near to us, gazing in mute astonishment, became alarmed, and scuttling down the rocks, plumped or fell, rather than ran, into the sea. It dived in a moment, and a few seconds afterwards, came out of the water far ahead, with such a spring, and such a dive back into the sea again, that we could scarcely believe it was not a fish that had leaped in sport.

"That beats everything," said Peterkin, rubbing his nose, and screwing up his face with an expression of exasperated amazement. "I've heard of a thing being neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, but I never did expect to see a brute that was all three together—at once—in one! But look there!" he continued, pointing with a look of resignation to the shore—"look there! there's no end to it. What *has* that brute got under its tail?"

We turned to look in the direction pointed out, and there saw a penguin walking slowly and very sedately along the shore with an egg under its tail. There were several others, we observed, burdened in the same way; and we found afterwards that these were a species of penguins that always carried their eggs so. Indeed, they had a most convenient cavity for the purpose, just between the tail and the legs. We were very much impressed with the regularity and order of this colony. The island seemed to be apportioned out into squares, of which each penguin possessed one, and sat in stiff solemnity in the middle of it, or took a slow march up and down the spaces between. Some were hatching their eggs, but others were feeding their young ones in a manner that caused us to laugh not a little. The mother stood on a mound or raised rock, while the young one stood patiently below her on the ground. Suddenly the mother raised her head and uttered a series of the most discordant cackling sounds.

"She's going to choke," cried Peterkin.

But this was not the case, although, I confess, she looked like it. In a few seconds she put down her head and opened her mouth, into which the young one thrust its beak and seemed to suck something from her throat. Then the cackling was renewed, the sucking continued and so the operation of feeding was carried on till the young one was satisfied; but what she fed her little one with we could not tell.

"Now, just look yonder!" said Peterkin, in an excited tone; "if that isn't the most abominable piece of maternal deception I ever saw! That rascally old lady penguin has just pitched her young one into the sea, and there's another about to follow her example."

This indeed seemed to be the case, for on the top of a steep rock close to the edge of the sea we observed an old penguin endeavouring to entice her young one into the water; but the young one seemed very unwilling to go, and, notwithstanding the enticements of its mother, moved very slowly towards her. At last she went gently behind the young bird and pushed it a little towards the water, but with great tenderness, as much as to say, "Don't be afraid, darling; I won't hurt you, my pet!" but no sooner did she get it to the edge of the rock, where it stood looking pensively down at the sea, than she gave

it a sudden and violent push, sending it headlong down the slope into the water, where its mother left it to scramble ashore as it best could. We observed many of them employed in doing this, and we came to the conclusion that this is the way in which old penguins teach their children to swim.

Scarcely had we finished making our remarks on this, when we were startled by about a dozen of the old birds hopping in the most clumsy and ludicrous manner towards the sea. The beach here was a sloping rock, and when they came to it some of them succeeded in hopping down in safety, but others lost their balance, and rolled and scrambled down the slope in the most helpless manner. The instant they reached the water, however, they seemed to be in their proper element. They dived and bounded out of it and into it again and again with the utmost agility; and so, diving and bounding and sputtering—for they could not fly—they went rapidly out to sea.

On seeing this, Peterkin turned with a grave face to us and said, "It's my opinion that these birds are all stark, staring mad, and that this is an enchanted island. I therefore propose that we should either put about ship and fly in terror from the spot, or land valorously on the island, and sell our lives as dearly as we can."

"I vote for landing; so pull in, lads," said Jack, giving a stroke with his oar that made the boat spin. In a few seconds we ran the boat into a little creek, where we made her fast to a projecting piece of coral, and running up the beach, entered the ranks of the penguins armed with our cudgels and our spear. We were greatly surprised to find that, instead of attacking us or showing signs of fear at our approach, these curious birds did not move from their places until we laid hands on them, and merely turned their eyes on us in solemn, stupid wonder as we passed. There was one old penguin, however, that began to walk slowly towards the sea, and Peterkin took it into his head that he would try to interrupt its progress, so he ran between it and the sea and brandished his cudgel in its face. But this proved to be a resolute old bird. It would not retreat; nay, more, it would not cease to advance, but battled with Peterkin bravely and drove him before it until it reached the sea. Had Peterkin used his club he could easily have felled it, no doubt; but as he had no wish to do so cruel an act merely out of sport, he let the bird escape.

We spent fully three hours on this island in watching the habits of these curious birds, and when we finally left them, we all three concluded, after much consultation, that they were the most wonderful creatures we had ever seen; and further, we thought it probable that they were the most wonderful creatures in the world!

CHAPTER XVIII.

An awful storm and its consequences—Narrow escape—A rock proves a sure foundation—A fearful night and a bright morning—Deliverance from danger.

It was evening before we left the island of the penguins. As we had made up our minds to encamp for the night on a small island, whereon grew a few cocoa nut trees, which was about two miles off, we lay to our oars with some energy. But a danger was in store for us which we had not anticipated. The wind, which had carried us so quickly to Penguin Island, freshened as evening drew on to a stiff

breeze, and before we had made half the distance to the small island, it became a regular gale. Although it was not so directly against us as to prevent our rowing in the course we wished to go, yet it checked us very much; and although the force of the sea was somewhat broken by the island, the waves soon began to rise, and to roll their broken crests against our small craft, so that she began to take in water, and we had much ado to keep ourselves afloat. At last the wind and sea together became so violent that we found it impossible to make the island, so Jack suddenly put the head of the boat round and ordered Peterkin and me to hoist a corner of the sail, intending to run back to Penguin Island.

"We shall at least have the shelter of the bushes," he said, as the boat flew before the wind, "and the penguins will keep us company."

As Jack spoke, the wind suddenly shifted, and blew so much against us that we were forced to hoist more of the sail in order to beat up for the island, being by this change thrown much to leeward of it. What made matters worse was, that the gale came in squalls, so that we were more than once nearly upset.

"Stand by, both of you," cried Jack, in a quick earnest tone; "be ready to douse the sail. I very much fear we won't make the island after all."

Peterkin and I were so much in the habit of trusting everything to Jack that we had fallen into the way of not considering things, especially such things as were under Jack's care. We had, therefore, never doubted for a moment that all was going well, so that it was with no little anxiety that we heard him make the above remark. However, we had no time for question or surmise, for at the moment he spoke a heavy squall was bearing down upon us, and as we were then flying with our lee gunwale dipping occasionally under the waves, it was evident that we should have to lower our sail altogether. In a few seconds the squall struck the boat, but Peterkin and I had the sail down in a moment, so that it did not upset us; but when it was past we were more than half full of water. This I soon bailed out, while Peterkin again hoisted a corner of the sail; but the evil which Jack had feared came upon us. We found it quite impossible to make Penguin Island. The gale carried us quickly past it towards the open sea, and the terrible truth flashed upon us that we should be swept out and left to perish miserably in a small boat in the midst of the wide ocean.

This idea was forced very strongly upon us because we saw nothing in the direction whither the wind was blowing us save the raging billows of the sea; and, indeed, we trembled as we gazed around us, for we were now beyond the shelter of the islands, and it seemed as though any of the huge billows, which curled over in masses of foam, might swallow us up in a moment. The water, also, began to wash in over our sides, and I had to keep constantly bailing, for Jack could not quit the helm nor Peterkin the sail for an instant without endangering our lives. In the midst of this distress Jack uttered an exclamation of hope, and pointed towards a low island or rock which lay directly ahead. It had been hitherto unobserved, owing to the dark clouds that obscured the sky and the blinding spray that seemed to fill the whole atmosphere.

As we neared this rock we observed that it was quite destitute of trees and verdure, and so low that the sea broke completely over it.

In fact it was nothing more than the summit of one of the coral formations, which rose only a few feet above the level of the water, and was, in stormy weather, all but invisible. Over this island the waves were breaking in the utmost fury, and our hearts sank within us as we saw that there was not a spot where we could thrust our little boat without its being dashed to pieces.

"Show a little bit more sail," cried Jack, as we swept past the weather side of the rock with fearful speed.

"Ay, ay," answered Peterkin, hoisting about a foot more of our sail.

Little though the addition was, it caused the boat to lie over and creak so loudly, as we cleft the foaming waves, that I expected to be upset every instant; and I blamed Jack in my heart for his rashness. But I did him injustice, for although during two seconds the water rushed in-board in a torrent, he succeeded in steering us sharply round to the leeward side of the rock, where the water was comparatively calm and the force of the breeze broken.

"Out with your oars now, lads! that's well done. Give way!" We obeyed instantly. The oars splashed into the waves together. One good hearty pull, and we were floating in a comparatively calm creek that was so narrow as to be barely able to admit our boat. Here we were in perfect safety, and as we leaped on shore and fastened our cable to the rocks, I thanked God in my heart for our deliverance from so great danger. But although I have said we were now in safety, I suspect that few of my readers would have envied our position. It is true we had no lack of food, but we were drenched to the skin; the sea was foaming round us and the spray flying over our heads, so that we were completely enveloped, as it were, in water; the spot on which we had landed was not more than twelve yards in diameter, and from this spot we could not move without the risk of being swept away by the storm. At the upper end of the creek was a small hollow or cave in the rock, which sheltered us from the fury of the winds and waves; and as the rock extended in a sort of ledge over our heads, it prevented the spray from falling upon us.

"Why," said Peterkin, beginning to feel cheery again, "it seems to me that we have got into a mermaid's cave, for there is nothing but water all round us; and as for earth or sky, they are things of the past."

Peterkin's idea was not inappropriate, for what with the sea roaring in white foam up to our very feet, and the spray flying in white sheets continually over our heads, and the water dripping heavily from the ledge above like a curtain in front of our cave it did seem to us very much more like being below than above water.

"Now, boys," cried Jack, "bestir yourselves, and let's make ourselves comfortable.—Toss out our provisions, Peterkin; and here, Ralph, lend a hand to haul up the boat. Look sharp."

"Ay, ay, captain," we cried, as we hastened to obey, much cheered by the hearty manner of our comrade.

Fortunately the cave, although not very deep, was quite dry, so that we succeeded in making ourselves much more comfortable than could have been expected. We landed our provisions, wrung the water out of our garments, spread our sail below us for a carpet, and after having eaten a hearty meal, began to feel quite cheerful. But as night drew

on our spirits sank again, for with the daylight all evidence of our security vanished away. We could no longer see the firm rock on which we lay, while we were stunned with the violence of the tempest that raged around us. The night grew pitchy dark as it advanced, so that we could not see our hands when we held them up before our eyes, and were obliged to feel each other occasionally to make sure that we were safe, for the storm at last became so terrible that it was difficult to make our voices audible. A slight variation of the wind, as we supposed, caused a few drops of spray ever and anon to blow into our faces; and the eddy of the sea, in its mad boiling, washed up into our little creek until it reached our feet and threatened to tear away our boat. In order to prevent this latter calamity, we hauled the boat farther up and held the cable in our hands. Occasional flashes of lightning shone with a ghastly glare through the watery curtains around us, and lent additional horror to the scene. Yet we longed for those dismal flashes, for they were less appalling than the thick blackness that succeeded them. Crashing peals of thunder seemed to tear the skies in twain, and fell upon our ears through the wild yelling of the hurricane as if it had been but a gentle summer breeze; while the billows burst upon the weather side of the island until we fancied that the solid rock was giving way, and in our agony we clung to the bare ground, expecting every moment to be whirled away and whelmed in the black howling sea. Oh, it was a night of terrible anxiety! and no one can conceive the feelings of intense gratitude and relief with which we at last saw the dawn of day break through the vapoury mists around us.

For three days and three nights we remained on this rock, while the storm continued to rage with unabated fury. On the morning of the fourth day it suddenly ceased, and the wind fell altogether; but the waves still ran so high that we did not dare to put off in our boat. During the greater part of this period we scarcely slept above a few minutes at a time, but on the third night we slept soundly, and awoke early on the fourth morning to find the sea very much down, and the sun shining brightly again in the clear blue sky.

It was with light hearts that we launched forth once more in our little boat and steered away for our island home, which, we were overjoyed to find, was quite visible on the horizon, for we had feared that we had been blown out of sight of it altogether. As it was a dead calm, we had to row during the greater part of the day; but towards the afternoon a fair breeze sprang up, which enabled us to hoist our sail. We soon passed Penguin Island and the other island which we had failed to reach on the day the storm commenced; but as we had still enough of provisions, and were anxious to get home, we did not land, to the great disappointment of Peterkin, who seemed to entertain quite an affection for the penguins.

Although the breeze was pretty fresh for several hours, we did not reach the outer reef of our island till nightfall, and before we had sailed more than a hundred yards into the lagoon, the wind died away altogether, so that we had to take to our oars again. It was late, and the moon and stars were shining brightly, when we arrived opposite the bower and leaped upon the strand. So glad were we to be safe back again on our beloved island, that we scarcely took time to drag the boat a short way up the beach, and then ran up to see that all was right at the bower. I must confess, however, that my

joy was mingled with a vague sort of fear lest our home had been visited and destroyed during our absence ; but on reaching it we found everything just as it had been left, and the poor black cat curled up, sound asleep, on the coral table in front of our humble dwelling.

CHAPTER XIX.

Shoemaking—The even tenor of our way suddenly interrupted—An unexpected visit and an appalling battle—We all become warriors, and Jack proves himself to be a hero.

For many months after this we continued to live on our island in uninterrupted harmony and happiness. Sometimes we went out a-fishing in the lagoon, and sometimes went a-hunting in the woods, or ascended to the mountain-top, by way of variety, although Peterkin always asserted that we went for the purpose of hailing any ship that might chance to heave in sight. But I am certain that none of us wished to be delivered from our captivity, for we were extremely happy, and Peterkin used to say that as we were very young we should not feel the loss of a year or two. Peterkin, as I have said before, was thirteen years of age, Jack eighteen, and I fifteen. But Jack was very tall, strong, and manly for his age, and might easily have been mistaken for twenty.

The climate was so beautiful that it seemed to be a perpetual summer, and as many of the fruit-trees continued to bear fruit and blossom all the year round, we never wanted for a plentiful supply of food. The hogs, too, seemed rather to increase than diminish, although Peterkin was very frequent in his attacks on them with his spear. If at any time we failed in finding a drove, we had only to pay a visit to the plum-tree before mentioned, where we always found a large family of them asleep under its branches.

We employed ourselves very busily during this time in making various garments of cocoa-nut cloth, as those with which we landed were beginning to be very ragged. Peterkin also succeeded in making excellent shoes out of the skin of the old hog, in the following manner :—He first cut a piece of the hide, of an oblong form, a few inches longer than his foot. This he soaked in water, and while it was wet he sewed up one end of it, so as to form a rough imitation of that part of the heel of a shoe where the seam is. This done, he bored a row of holes all round the edge of the piece of skin, through which a tough line was passed. Into the sewed-up part of this shoe he thrust his heel, then drawing the string tight, the edges rose up and overlapped his foot all round. It is true there were a great many ill-looking puckers in these shoes, but we found them very serviceable notwithstanding, and Jack came at last to prefer them to his long boots. We also made various other useful articles, which added to our comfort, and once or twice spoke of building us a house ; but we had so great an affection for the bower, and withal found it so serviceable, that we determined not to leave it, nor to attempt the building of a house, which in such a climate might turn out to be rather disagreeable than useful.

We often examined the pistol that we had found in the house on the other side of the island, and Peterkin wished much that we had

powder and shot, as it would render pig-killing much easier ; but after all, we had become so expert in the use of our sling and bow and spear, that we were independent of more deadly weapons.

Diving in the Water Garden also continued to afford us as much pleasure as ever ; and Peterkin began to be a little more expert in the water from constant practice. As for Jack and me, we began to feel as if water were our native element, and revelled in it with so much confidence and comfort that Peterkin said he feared we would turn into fish some day, and swim off and leave him ; adding that he had been for a long time observing that Jack was becoming more and more like a shark every day. Whereupon Jack remarked that if he, Peterkin, were changed into a fish, he would certainly turn into nothing better or bigger than a shrimp. Poor Peterkin did not envy us our delightful excursions under water, except, indeed, when Jack would dive down to the bottom of the Water Garden, sit down on a rock and look up and make faces at him. Peterkin did feel envious then, and often said he would give anything to be able to do that. I was much amused when Peterkin said this ; for if he could only have seen his own face when he happened to take a short dive, he would have seen that Jack's was far surpassed by it ; the great difference being, however, that Jack made faces on purpose—Peterkin couldn't help it !

Now, while we were engaged with these occupations and amusements, an event occurred one day which was as unexpected as it was exceedingly alarming and very horrible.

Jack and I were sitting, as we were often wont to do, on the rocks at Spouting Cliff, and Peterkin was wringing the water from his garments, having recently fallen by accident into the sea—a thing he was constantly doing—when our attention was suddenly arrested by two objects which appeared on the horizon.

"What are yon, think you ?" I said, addressing Jack.

"I can't imagine," answered he. "I've noticed them for some time, and fancied they were black sea-gulls, but the more I look at them the more I feel convinced they are much larger than gulls."

"They seem to be coming towards us," said I.

"Hallo ! what's wrong ?" inquired Peterkin, coming up.

"Look there," said Jack.

"Whales !" cried Peterkin, shading his eyes with his hand. "No—eh—can they be boats, Jack ?"

Our hearts beat with excitement at the very thought of seeing human faces again.

"I think you are about right, Peterkin. But they seem to me to move strangely for boats," said Jack, in a low tone, as if he were talking to himself.

I noticed that a shade of anxiety crossed Jack's countenance as he gazed long and intently at the two objects, which were now nearing us fast. At last he sprang to his feet. "They are canoes, Ralph ! whether war-canoes or not I cannot tell ; but this I know, that all the natives of the South Sea Islands are fierce cannibals, and they have little respect for strangers. We must hide if they land here, which I earnestly hope they will not do."

I was greatly alarmed at Jack's speech, but I confess I thought less of what he said than of the earnest, anxious manner in which he

said it, and it was with very uncomfortable feelings that Peterkin and I followed him quickly into the woods.

"How unfortunate," said I, as we gained the shelter of the bushes, "that we have forgotten our arms!"

"It matters not," said Jack; "here are clubs enough and to spare." As he spoke, he laid his hand on a bundle of stout poles of various sizes, which Peterkin's ever-busy hands had formed during our frequent visits to the cliff, for no other purpose, apparently, than that of having something to do.

We each selected a stout club according to our several tastes, and lay down behind a rock, whence we could see the canoes approach, without ourselves being seen. At first we made an occasional remark on their appearance, but after they entered the lagoon, and drew near the beach, we ceased to speak, and gazed with intense interest at the scene before us.

We now observed that the foremost canoe was being chased by the other, and that it contained a few women and children, as well as men—perhaps forty souls altogether; while the canoe which pursued it contained only men. They seemed to be about the same in number, but were better armed, and had the appearance of being a war-party. Both crews were paddling with all their might, and it seemed as if the pursuers exerted themselves to overtake the fugitives ere they could land. In this, however, they failed. The foremost canoe made for the beach close beneath the rocks behind which we were concealed. Their short paddles flashed like meteors in the water, and sent up a constant shower of spray. The foam curled from the prow, and the eyes of the rowers glistened in their black faces as they strained every muscle of their naked bodies; nor did they relax their efforts till the canoe struck the beach with a violent shock; then with a shout of defiance the whole party sprang, as if by magic, from the canoe to the shore. Three women, two of whom carried infants in their arms, rushed into the woods; and the men crowded to the water's edge, with stones in their hands, spears levelled, and clubs brandished, to resist the landing of their enemies.

The distance between the two canoes had been about half-a-mile, and, at the great speed they were going, this was soon passed. As the pursuers neared the shore, no sign of fear or hesitation was noticeable. On they came like a wild charger—received but recked not of a shower of stones. The canoe struck, and with a yell that seemed to issue from the throats of incarnate fiends, they leaped into the water, and drove their enemies up the beach.

The battle that immediately ensued was frightful to behold. Most of the men wielded clubs of enormous size and curious shapes, with which they dashed out each other's brains. As they were almost entirely naked, and had to bound, stoop, leap, and run in their terrible hand-to-hand encounters, they looked more like demons than human beings. I felt my heart grow sick at the sight of this bloody battle, and would fain have turned away, but a species of fascination seemed to hold me down and glue my eyes upon the combatants. I observed that the attacking party was led by a most extraordinary being, who, from his size and peculiarity, I concluded was a chief. His hair was frizzed out to an enormous extent, so that it resembled a large turban. It was of a light-yellow hue, which surprised me much, for the man's body was as black as coal, and I felt convinced

that the hair must have been dyed. He was tattooed from head to foot; and his face, besides being tattooed, was besmeared with red paint, and streaked with white. Altogether, with his yellow turban-like hair, his Herculean black frame, his glittering eyes and white teeth, he seemed the most terrible monster I ever beheld. He was very active in the fight, and had already killed four men.

Suddenly the yellow-haired chief was attacked by a man quite as strong and large as himself. He flourished a heavy club something like an eagle's beak at the point. For a second or two these giants eyed each other warily, moving round and round, as if to catch each other at a disadvantage; but seeing that nothing was to be gained by this caution, and that the loss of time might effectually turn the tide of battle either way, they apparently made up their minds to attack at the same instant, for, with a wild shout and simultaneous spring, they swung their heavy clubs, which met with a loud report. Suddenly the yellow-haired savage tripped, his enemy sprang forward, the ponderous club was swung, but it did not descend, for at that moment the savage was felled to the ground by a stone from the hand of one who had witnessed his chief's danger. This was the turning-point in the battle. The savages who landed first turned and fled towards the bush, on seeing the fall of their chief. But not one escaped. They were all overtaken and felled to the earth. I saw however, that they were not all killed. Indeed, their enemies, now that they were conquered, seemed anxious to take them alive; and they succeeded in securing fifteen, whom they bound hand and foot with cords, and carrying them up into the woods, laid them down among the bushes. Here they left them, for what purpose I knew not, and returned to the scene of the late battle, where the remnant of the party were bathing their wounds.

Out of the forty blacks that composed the attacking party, only twenty-eight remained alive, two of whom were sent into the bush to hunt for the women and children. Of the other party, as I have said, only fifteen survived, and these were lying bound and helpless on the grass.

Jack and Peterkin and I now looked at each other, and whispered our fears that the savages might clamber up the rocks to search for fresh water, and so discover our place of concealment; but we were so much interested in watching their movements that we agreed to remain where we were,—and, indeed, we could not easily have risen without exposing ourselves to detection. One of the savages now went up to the wood, and soon returned with a bundle of firewood, and we were not a little surprised to see him set fire to it by the very same means used by Jack the time we made our first fire—namely, with the bow and drill. When the fire was kindled, two of the party went again to the woods and returned with one of the bound men. A dreadful feeling of horror crept over my heart as the thought flashed upon me that they were going to burn their enemies. As they bore him to the fire my feelings almost overpowered me. I gasped for breath, and seizing my club, endeavoured to spring to my feet; but Jack's powerful arm pinned me to the earth. Next moment one of the savages raised his club, and fractured the wretched creature's skull. He must have died instantly; and strange though it may seem, I confess to a feeling of relief when the deed was done, because I now knew that the poor savage could not be burned alive.

Scarcely had his limbs ceased to quiver when the monsters cut slices of flesh from his body, and, after roasting them slightly over the fire, devoured them.

Suddenly there arose a cry from the woods, and in a few seconds the two savages hastened towards the fire dragging the three women and their two infants along with them. One of those women was much younger than her companions, and we were struck with the modesty of her demeanour and the gentle expression of her face, which, although she had the flattish nose and thick lips of the others, was of a light-brown colour, and we conjectured that she must be of a different race. She and her companions wore short petticoats and a kind of tippet on their shoulders. Their hair was jet black, but instead of being long, was short and curly—though not woolly—somewhat like the hair of a young boy. While we gazed with interest and some anxiety at these poor creatures, the big chief advanced to one of the elder females and laid his hand upon the child. But the mother shrank from him, and clasping the little one to her bosom, uttered a wail of fear. With a savage laugh, the chief tore the child from her arms and tossed it into the sea. A low groan burst from Jack's lips as he witnessed this atrocious act and heard the mother's shriek, as she fell insensible on the sand. The rippling waves rolled the child on the beach, as if they refused to be a party in such a foul murder, and we could observe that the little one still lived.

The young girl was now brought forward, and the chief addressed her; but although we heard his voice and even the words distinctly, of course we could not understand what he said. The girl made no answer to his fierce questions, and we saw by the way in which he pointed to the fire that he threatened her life.

"Peterkin," said Jack, in a hoarse whisper, "have you got your knife?"

"Yes," replied Peterkin, whose face was pale as death.

"That will do. Listen to me, and do my bidding quick.—Here is the small knife, Ralph.—Fly both of you through the bush, cut the cords that bind the prisoners, and set them free. There! quick, ere it be too late." Jack sprang up, and seized a heavy but short bludgeon, while his strong frame trembled with emotion, and large drops rolled down his forehead.

At this moment the man who had butchered the savage a few minutes before advanced towards the girl with his heavy club. Jack uttered a yell that rang like a death-shriek among the rocks. With one bound he leaped over a precipice full fifteen feet high, and before the savages had recovered from their surprise, was in the midst of them; while Peterkin and I dashed through the bushes towards the prisoners. With one blow of his staff Jack felled the man with the club, then turning round with a look of fury, he rushed upon the big chief with the yellow hair. Had the blow which Jack aimed at his head taken effect, the huge savage would have needed no second stroke; but he was agile as a cat, and avoided it by springing to one side, while, at the same time, he swung his ponderous club at the head of his foe. It was now Jack's turn to leap aside, and well was it for him that the first outburst of his blind fury was over, else he had become an easy prey to his gigantic antagonist; but Jack was cool now. He darted his blows rapidly and well, and the superiority of his light

weapon was strikingly proved in this combat; for while he could easily evade the blows of the chief's heavy club, the chief could not so easily evade those of his light one. Nevertheless, so quick was he, and so frightfully did he fling about the mighty weapon, that although Jack struck him almost every blow, the strokes had to be delivered so quickly that they wanted force to be very effectual.

It was lucky for Jack that the other savages considered the success of their chief in this encounter to be so certain that they refrained from interfering. Had they doubted it, they would have probably ended the matter at once by felling him. But they contented themselves with awaiting the issue.

The force which the chief expended in wielding his club now began to be apparent. His movements became slower, his breath hissed through his clinched teeth, and the surprised savages drew nearer in order to render assistance. Jack observed this movement. He felt that his fate was sealed, and resolved to cast his life upon the next blow. The chief's club was again about to descend on his head. He might have evaded it easily, but instead of doing so, he suddenly shortened his grasp of his own club, rushed in under the blow, struck his adversary right between the eyes with all his force, and fell to the earth, crushed beneath the senseless body of the chief. A dozen clubs flew high in the air, ready to descend on the head of Jack; but they hesitated a moment, for the massive body of the chief completely covered him. That moment saved his life. Ere the savages could tear the chief's body away, seven of their number fell prostrate beneath the clubs of the prisoners whom Peterkin and I had set free, and two others fell under our own hand. We could never have accomplished this had not our enemies been so engrossed with the fight between Jack and their chief that they had failed to observe us until we were upon them. They still outnumbered our party by three; but we were flushed with victory, while they were taken by surprise and dispirited by the fall of their chief. Moreover, they were awe-struck by the sweeping fury of Jack, who seemed to have lost his senses altogether, and had no sooner shaken himself free of the chief's body than he rushed into the midst of them, and in three blows equalized our numbers. Peterkin and I flew to the rescue, the savages followed us, and in less than ten minutes the whole of our opponents were knocked down or made prisoners, bound hand and foot, and extended side by side upon the sea-shore.

CHAPTER XX.

Intercourse with the savages—Cannibalism prevented—The slain are buried and the survivors depart, leaving us again alone on our Coral Island.

AFTER the battle was over, the savages crowded round us and gazed at us in surprise, while they continued to pour upon us a flood of questions, which, being wholly unintelligible, of course we could not answer. However, by way of putting an end to it, Jack took the chief (who had recovered from the effects of his wound) by the hand and shook it warmly. No sooner did the blacks see that this was meant to express good-will than they shook hands with us all round. After this ceremony was gone through Jack went up to the girl, who had never once moved from the rock where she had been left, but

had continued an eager spectator of all that had passed. He made signs to her to follow him, and then, taking the chief by the hand, was about to conduct him to the bower, when his eye fell on the poor infant which had been thrown into the sea and was still lying on the shore. Dropping the chief's hand he hastened towards it, and to his great joy found it to be still alive. We also found that the mother was beginning to recover slowly.

"Here, get out o' the way," said Jack, pushing us aside, as we stooped over the poor woman and endeavoured to restore her; "I'll soon bring her round." So saying, he placed the infant on her bosom and laid its warm cheek on hers. The effect was wonderful. The woman opened her eyes, felt the child, looked at it, and with a cry of joy clasped it in her arms, at the same time endeavouring to rise, for the purpose, apparently, of rushing into the woods.

"There, that's all right," said Jack, once more taking the chief by the hand.—"Now, Ralph and Peterkin, make the women and these fellows follow me to the bower. We'll entertain them as hospitably as we can."

In a few minutes the savages were all seated on the ground in front of the bower making a hearty meal off a cold roast pig, several ducks, and a variety of cold fish, together with an unlimited supply of cocoa-nuts, bread-fruits, yams, taro, and plums; with all of which they seemed to be quite familiar and perfectly satisfied.

Meanwhile, we three, being thoroughly knocked up with our day's work, took a good draught of cocoa-nut lemonade, and throwing ourselves on our beds fell fast asleep. The savages, it seems, followed our example, and in half-an-hour the whole camp was buried in repose.

How long we slept I cannot tell, but this I know, that when we lay down the sun was setting, and when we awoke it was high in the heavens. I awoke Jack, who started up in surprise, being unable at first to comprehend our situation. "Now, then," said he, springing up, "let's see after breakfast.—Hallo, Peterkin, lazy fellow! how long do you mean to lie there?"

Peterkin yawned heavily. "Well," said he, opening his eyes and looking up after some trouble, "if it isn't to-morrow morning, and me thinking it was to-day all this time!—Hallo, Venus! where did you come from? you seem tolerably at home, anyhow. Bah! might as well speak to the cat as to you—better, in fact, for it understands me, and you don't."

This remark was called forth by the sight of one of the elderly females, who had seated herself on the rock in front of the bower, and, having placed her child at her feet, was busily engaged in devouring the remains of a roast pig.

By this time the natives outside were all astir, and breakfast in an advanced state of preparation. During the course of it we made sundry attempts to converse with the natives by signs, but without effect. At last we hit upon a plan of discovering their names. Jack pointed to his breast and said "Jack" very distinctly; then he pointed to Peterkin and to me, repeating our names at the same time. Then he pointed to himself again, and said "Jack," and laying his finger on the breast of the chief, looked inquiringly into his face. The chief instantly understood him, and said "Tararo" twice distinctly. Jack repeated it after him, and the chief, nodding his head approvingly, said "Chuck." On hearing which Peterkin exploded

with laughter ; but Jack turned, and with a frown rebuked him, saying, "I must look even more indignantly at you than I feel, Peterkin, you rascal, for these fellows don't like to be laughed at." Then turning towards the youngest of the women, who was seated at the door of the bower, he pointed to her ; whereupon the chief said, "Avatea," and pointing towards the sun raised his finger slowly towards the zenith, where it remained steadily for a minute or two.

"What can that mean, I wonder?" said Jack, looking puzzled.

"Perhaps," said Peterkin, "the chief means she is an angel come down to stay here for a while. If so, she's an uncommonly black one!"

We did not feel quite satisfied with this explanation, so Jack went up to her and said, "Avatea." The woman smiled sadly, and nodded her head, at the same time pointing to her breast, and then to the sun, in the same manner as the chief had done. We were much puzzled to know what this could signify, but as there was no way of solving our difficulty we were obliged to rest content.

Jack now made signs to the natives to follow him, and taking up his axe, he led them to the place where the battle had been fought. Here we found the prisoners, who had passed the night on the beach, having been totally forgotten by us, as our minds had been full of our guests, and were ultimately overcome by sleep. They did not seem the worse for their exposure, however, as we judged by the hearty appetite with which they devoured the breakfast that was soon after given to them. Jack then began to dig a hole in the sand, and after working a few seconds, he pointed to it and to the dead bodies that lay exposed on the beach. The natives immediately perceived what he wanted, and running for their paddles, dug a hole in the course of half-an-hour that was quite large enough to contain all the bodies of the slain. When it was finished they tossed their dead enemies into it with so much indifference that we felt assured they would not have put themselves to this trouble had we not asked them to do so. The body of the yellow-haired chief was the last thrown in. This wretched man would have recovered from the blow with which Jack felled him, and indeed he did endeavour to rise during the *mêlée* that followed his fall ; but one of his enemies, happening to notice the action, dealt him a blow with his club that killed him on the spot.

While they were about to throw the sand over this chief, one of the savages stooped over him, and with a knife, made apparently of stone, cut a large slice of flesh from his thigh. We knew at once that he intended to make use of this for food, and could not repress a cry of horror and disgust.

"Come, come, you blackguard!" cried Jack, starting up and seizing the man by the arm, "pitch that into the hole. Do you hear?"

The savage, of course, did not understand the command, but he perfectly understood the look of disgust with which Jack regarded the flesh, and his fierce gaze as he pointed towards the hole. Nevertheless he did not obey. Jack instantly turned to Tararo and made signs to him to enforce obedience. The chief seemed to understand the appeal, for he stepped forward, raised his club, and was on the point of dashing out the brains of his offending subject, when Jack sprang forward and caught his uplifted arm.

"Stop," he shouted, "you blockhead ! I don't want you to kill the man." He then pointed again to the flesh and to the hole. The chief uttered a few words, which had the desired effect ; for the man threw the flesh into the hole, which was immediately filled up. This man was of a morose, sulky disposition, and during all the time he remained on the island, regarded us, especially Jack, with a scowling visage. His name, we found, was Mahine.

The next three or four days were spent by the savages in mending their canoe, which had been damaged by the violent shock it had sustained on striking the shore. This canoe was a very curious structure. It was about thirty feet long, and had a high towering stern. The timbers, of which it was partly composed, were fastened much in the same way as those of our little boat were put together ; but the part that seemed most curious to us was a sort of outrigger, or long plank, which was attached to the body of the canoe by means of two stout cross-beams. These beams kept the plank parallel with the canoe, but not in contact with it, for it floated in the water with an open space between ; thus forming a sort of double canoe. This we found was intended to prevent the upsetting of the canoe, which was so narrow that it could not have maintained an upright position without the outrigger. We could not help wondering both at the ingenuity and the clumsiness of this contrivance.

When the canoe was ready, we assisted the natives to carry the prisoners into it, and helped them to load it with provisions and fruit. Peterkin also went to the plum-tree for the purpose of making a special onslaught upon the hogs, and killed no less than six of them. These we baked and presented to our friends on the day of their departure. On that day Tararo made a great many energetic signs to us, which, after much consideration, we came to understand were proposals that we should go away with him to his island ; but having no desire to do so, we shook our heads very decidedly. However, we consoled him by presenting him with our rusty axe, which we thought we could spare, having the excellent one which had been so providentially washed ashore to us the day we were wrecked. We also gave him a piece of wood with our names carved on it, and a piece of string to hang it round his neck as an ornament.

In a few minutes more we were all assembled on the beach. Being unable to speak to the savages, we went through the ceremony of shaking hands, and expected they would depart ; but before doing so, Tararo went up to Jack and rubbed noses with him, after which he did the same with Peterkin and me ! Seeing that this was their mode of salutation, we determined to conform to their custom, so we rubbed noses heartily with the whole party, women and all ! The only disagreeable part of the process was when we came to rub noses with Mahine, and Peterkin afterwards said that when he saw his wolfish eyes glaring so close to his face, he felt much more inclined to *bang* than to *rub* his nose. Avatea was the last to take leave of us, and we experienced a feeling of real sorrow when she approached to bid us farewell. Besides her modest air and gentle manners, she was the only one of the party who exhibited the smallest sign of regret at parting from us. Going up to Jack, she put out her flat little nose to be rubbed, and thereafter paid the same compliment to Peterkin and me.

An hour later the canoe was out of sight, and we, with an indefin-



A Terrible Surprise.

able feeling of sadness creeping round our hearts, were seated in silence beneath the shadow of our bower, meditating on the wonderful events of the last few days.

CHAPTER XXI.

Sagacious and moral remarks in regard to life—A sail !—An unexpected salute—The end of the black cat—A terrible dive—An incautious proceeding and a frightful catastrophe.

LIFE is a strange compound. Peterkin used to say of it that it beat a druggist's shop all to sticks ; for whereas the first is a compound of good and bad, the other is a horrible compound of all that is utterly detestable. And indeed the more I consider it the more I am struck with the strange mixture of good and evil that exists not only in the material earth but in our own natures. In our own Coral Island we had experienced every variety of good that a bountiful Creator could heap on us. Yet on the night of the storm we had seen how almost in our case—and altogether, no doubt, in the case of others less fortunate—all this good might be swept away for ever. We had seen the rich fruit-trees waving in the soft air, the tender herbs shooting upwards under the benign influence of the bright sun ; and the next day we had seen these good and beautiful trees and plants uprooted by the hurricane, crushed and hurled to the ground in destructive devastation. We had lived for many months in a clime for the most part so beautiful, that we had often wondered whether Adam and Eve had found Eden more sweet ; and we had seen the quiet solitudes of our paradise suddenly broken in upon by ferocious savages, and the white sands stained with blood and strewed with lifeless forms ; yet among these cannibals we had seen many symptoms of a kindly nature. I pondered these things much, and while I considered them there recurred to my memory those words which I had read in my Bible—the works of God are wonderful, and His ways past finding out.

After these poor savages had left us, we used to hold long and frequent conversations about them, and I noticed that Peterkin's manner was now much altered. He did not, indeed, jest less heartily than before, but he did so less frequently, and often there was a tone of deep seriousness in his manner, if not in his words, which made him seem to Jack and me as if he had grown two years older within a few days. But indeed I was not surprised at this, when I reflected on the awful realities which we had witnessed so lately. We could by no means shake off a tendency to gloom for several weeks afterwards ; but as time wore away our usual good spirits returned somewhat, and we began to think of the visit of the savages with feelings akin to those with which we recall a terrible dream.

One day we were all enjoying ourselves in the Water Garden, preparatory to going on a fishing excursion ; for Peterkin had kept us in such constant supply of hogs that we had become quite tired of pork and desired a change. Peterkin was sunning himself on the ledge of rock, while we were creeping among the rocks below. Happening to look up, I observed Peterkin cutting the most extraordinary capers and making violent gesticulations for us to come up ; so I gave Jack a push and rose immediately.

"A sail ! a sail !—Ralph, look ; Jack, away on the horizon there, just over the entrance to the lagoon !" cried Peterkin, as we scrambled up the rocks.

"So it is, and a schooner too !" said Jack, as he proceeded hastily to dress.

Our hearts were thrown into a terrible flutter by this discovery, for if it should touch at our island we had no doubt the captain would be happy to give us a passage to some of the civilized islands, where we could find a ship sailing for England or some other part of Europe. Home, with all its associations, rushed in upon my heart like a flood, and much though I loved the Coral Island and the bower which had now been our home so long, I felt that I could have quitted all at that moment without a sigh. With joyful anticipations we hastened to the highest point of rock near our dwelling, and awaited the arrival of the vessel, for we now perceived that she was making straight for the island, under a steady breeze.

In less than an hour she was close to the reef, where she rounded to, and backed her topsails in order to survey the coast. Seeing this, and fearing they might not perceive us, we all three waved pieces of cocoa-nut cloth in the air, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing them beginning to lower a boat and bustle about the decks as if they meant to land. Suddenly a flag was run up to the peak, a little cloud of white smoke rose from the schooner's side, and before we could guess their intentions, a cannon-shot came crashing through the bushes, carried away several cocoa-nut trees in its passage, and burst in atoms against the cliff a few yards below the spot on which we stood.

With fellings of terror we now observed that the flag at the schooner's peak was black, with a Death's-head and cross-bones upon it. As we gazed at each other in silent amazement, the word "pirate" escaped our lips simultaneously.

"What is to be done ?" cried Peterkin, as we observed a boat shoot from the vessel's side and make for the entrance of the reef. "If they take us off the island, it will either be to throw us overboard for sport, or to make pirates of us."

I did not reply, but looked at Jack, as being our only resource in this emergency. He stood with folded arms, and his eyes fixed with a grave, anxious expression on the ground. "There is but one hope," said he, turning with a sad expression of countenance to Peterkin ; "perhaps, after all, we may not have to resort to it. If these villains are anxious to take us, they will soon overrun the whole island. But come, follow me."

Stopping abruptly in his speech, Jack bounded into the woods, and led us by a circuitous route to Spouting Cliff. Here he halted, and, advancing cautiously to the rocks, glanced over their edge. We were soon by his side, and saw the boat, which was crowded with armed men, just touching the shore. In an instant the crew landed, formed line, and rushed up to our bower.

In a few seconds we saw them hurrying back to the boat, one of them swinging the poor cat round his head by the tail. On reaching the water's edge, he tossed it far into the sea, and joined his companions, who appeared to be holding a hasty council.

"You see what we may expect," said Jack bitterly. "The man who will wantonly kill a poor brute for sport will think little of murdering

a fellow-creature. Now, boys, we have but one chance left—the Diamond Cave.”

“The Diamond Cave!” cried Peterkin; “then my chance is a poor one, for I could not dive into it if all the pirates on the Pacific were at my heels.”

“Nay, but,” said I, “we will take you down, Peterkin, if you will only trust us.”

As I spoke we observed the pirates scatter over the beach, and radiate, as if from a centre, towards the woods and along the shore.

“Now, Peterkin,” said Jack, in a solemn tone, “you must make up your mind to do it, or we must make up our minds to die in your company.”

“O Jack, my dear friend,” cried Peterkin, turning pale, “leave me; I don’t believe they’ll think it worth while to kill me. Go, you and Ralph, and dive into the cave.”

“That will not I,” answered Jack quietly, while he picked up a stout cudgel from the ground.—“So now Ralph, we must prepare to meet these fellows. Their motto is, ‘No quarter.’ If we can manage to floor those coming in this direction, we may escape into the woods for a while.”

“There are five of them,” said I; “we have no chance.”

“Come, then,” cried Peterkin, starting up, and grasping Jack convulsively by the arm, “let us dive; I will go.”

Those who are not naturally expert in the water know well the fellings of horrors that overwhelm them, when in it, at the bare idea of being held down even for a few seconds—that spasmodic, involuntary recoil from compulsory immersion which has no connection whatever with cowardice; and they will understand the amount of resolution that it required in Peterkin to allow himself to be dragged down to a depth of ten feet, and then, through a narrow tunnel, into an almost pitch-dark cavern. But there was no alternative. The pirates had already caught sight of us, and were now within a short distance of the rocks.

Jack and I seized Peterkin by the arms.

“Now, keep quite still, no struggling,” said Jack, “or we are lost.”

Peterkin made no reply, but the stern gravity of his marble features, and the tension of his muscles, satisfied us that he had fully made up his mind to go through with it. Just as the pirates gained the foot of the rocks, which hid us for a moment from their view, we bent over the sea, and plunged down together head-foremost. Peterkin behaved like a hero. He floated passively between us like a log of wood, and we passed the tunnel and rose into the cave in a shorter space of time than I had ever done it before.

Peterkin drew a long, deep breath on reaching the surface, and in a few seconds we were all standing on the ledge of rock in safety. Jack now searched for the tinder and torch which always lay in the cave. He soon found them, and lighting the torch, revealed to Peterkin’s wondering gaze the marvels of the place. But we were too wet to waste much time in looking about us. Our first care was to take off our clothes and wring them as dry as we could. This done, we proceeded to examine into the state of our larder, for, as Jack truly remarked there was no knowing how long the pirates might remain on the island.

“Perhaps,” said Peterkin, “they may take it into their heads to

stop here altogether, and so we shall be buried alive in this place."

"Don't you think, Peterkin, that it's the nearest thing to being drowned alive that you ever felt?" said Jack with a smile. "But I've no fear of that. These villains never stay long on shore. The sea is their home, so you may depend upon it that they won't stay more than a day or two at the furthest."

We now began to make arrangements for spending the night in the cavern. At various periods Jack and I had conveyed cocoa-nuts and other fruits, besides rolls of cocoa-nut cloth, to this submarine cave, partly for amusement, and partly from a feeling that we might possibly be driven one day to take shelter here from the savages. Little did we imagine that the first savages who would drive us into it would be white savages, perhaps our own countymen. We found the cocoa-nuts in good condition, and the cooked yams, but the bread-fruits were spoiled. We also found the cloth where we left it, and on opening it out there proved to be sufficient to make a bed : which was important, as the rock was damp. Having collected it all together, we spread out our bed, placed our torch in the midst of us, and ate our supper. It was indeed a strange chamber to feast in ; and we could not help remarking on the cold, ghastly appearance of the walls, and the black water at our side, with the thick darkness beyond, and the sullen sound of the drops that fell at long intervals from the roof of the cavern into the still water, and the strong contrast between all this and our bed and supper, which, with our faces, were lit up with the deep red flame of the torch.

We sat long over our meal, talking together in subdued voices, for we did not like the dismal echoes that rang through the vault above when we happened to raise them. At last the faint light that came through the opening died away, warning us that it was night and time for rest. We therefore put out our torch and lay down to sleep.

On awaking, it was some time ere we could collect our faculties so as to remember where we were, and we were in much uncertainty as to whether it was early or late. We saw by the faint light that it was day, but could not guess at the hour ; so Jack proposed that he should dive out and reconnoitre.

"No Jack," said I ; "do you rest here. You've had enough to do during the last few days. Rest yourself now, and take care of Peterkin, while I go out to see what the pirates are about. I'll be very careful not to expose myself, and I'll bring you word again in a short time."

"Very well, Ralph," answered Jack : "please yourself, but don't be long ; and if you'll take my advice you'll go in your clothes, for I would like to have some fresh cocoa-nuts, and climbing trees without clothes is uncomfortable, to say the least of it."

"The pirates will be sure to keep a sharp look-out," said Peterkin, "so pray, be careful."

"No fear," said I ; "good-bye."

"Good-bye," answered my comrades.

And while the words were yet sounding in my ears, I plunged into the water, and in a few seconds found myself in the open air. On rising, I was careful to come up gently and to breathe softly, while I kept close in beside the rocks ; but as I observed no one near me, I crept slowly out, and ascended the cliff a step at a time, till I ob-

tained a full view of the shore. No pirates were to be seen—even their boat was gone; but as it was possible they might have hidden themselves, I did not venture too boldly forward. Then it occurred to me to look out to sea, when, to my surprise, I saw the pirate schooner sailing away almost hull down on the horizon! On seeing this I uttered a shout of joy. Then my first impulse was to dive back to tell my companions the good news; but I checked myself, and ran to the top of the cliff, in order to make sure that the vessel I saw was indeed the pirate schooner. I looked long and anxiously at her, and giving vent to a deep sigh of relief, said aloud, “Yes, there she goes; the villains have been balked of their prey this time at least.”

“Not so sure of that!” said a deep voice at my side, while at the same moment a heavy hand grasped my shoulder, and held it as if in a vice.

CHAPTER XXII.

*I fall into the hands of pirates—How they treated me, and what I said to them—
The result of the whole ending in a melancholy separation and in a most unexpected gift.*

My heart seemed to leap into my throat at the words; and turning round, I beheld a man of immense stature and fierce aspect regarding me with a smile of contempt. He was a white man—that is to say, he was a man of European blood, though his face, from long exposure to the weather, was deeply bronzed. His dress was that of a common seaman, except that he had on a Greek skull-cap, and wore a broad shawl of the richest silk round his waist. In this shawl were placed two pairs of pistols and a heavy cutlass. He wore a beard and moustache, which, like the locks on his head, were short, curly, and sprinkled with grey hairs.

“So, youngster,” he said, with a sardonic smile, while I felt his grasp tighten on my shoulder, “the villains have been balked of their prey, have they? We shall see, we shall see. Now, you welp, look yonder.” As he spoke, the pirate uttered a shrill whistle. In a second or two it was answered, and the pirate boat rowed round the point at the Water Garden, and came rapidly towards us. “Now, go, make a fire on that point; and hark’ee, youngster, if you try to run away, I’ll send a quick and sure messenger after you,” and he pointed significantly at his pistols.

I obeyed in silence, and as I happened to have the burning glass in my pocket, a fire was speedily kindled, and a thick smoke ascended into the air. It had scarcely appeared for two minutes when the boom of a gun rolled over the sea, and looking up, I saw that the schooner was making for the island again. It now flashed across me that this was a ruse on the part of the pirates, and that they had sent their vessel away, knowing that it would lead us to suppose that they had left altogether. But there was no use of regret now. I was completely in their power, so I stood helplessly beside the pirate watching the crew of the boat as they landed on the beach. For an instant I contemplated rushing over the cliff into the sea, but this I saw that I could not now accomplish, as some of the men were already between me and the water.

There was a good deal of jesting at the success of their scheme, as the crew ascended the rocks and addressed the man who had captured me by the title of captain. They were a ferocious set of men, with shaggy beards and scowling brows. All of them were armed with cutlasses and pistols, and their costumes were, with trifling variations, similar to that of the captain. As I looked from one to the other, and observed the low, scowling brows, that never unbent, even when the men laughed, and the mean, rascally expression that sat on each face, I felt that my life hung by a hair.

"But where are the other cubs?" cried one of the men, with an oath that made me shudder. "I'll swear to it there were three, at least, if not more."

"You hear what he says, whelp: where are the other dogs?" said the captain.

"If you mean my companions," said I, in a low voice, "I won't tell you."

A loud laugh burst from the crew at this answer.

The pirate captain looked at me in surprise. Then drawing a pistol from his belt, he cocked it and said, "Now, youngster, listen to me. I've no time to waste here. If you don't tell me all you know, I'll blow your brains out! Where are your comrades?"

For an instant I hesitated, not knowing what to do in this extremity. Suddenly a thought occurred to me.

"Villain," said I, shaking my clenched fist in his face, "to blow my brains out would make short work of me, and be soon over; death by drowning is as sure, and the agony prolonged: yet, I tell you to your face, if you were to toss me over yonder cliff into the sea I would not tell you where my companions are, and I dare you to try me!"

The pirate captain grew white with rage as I spoke. "Say you so?" cried he, uttering a fierce oath—"Here, lads, take him by the legs and heave him in—quick!"

The men, who were utterly silenced with surprise at my audacity, advanced and seized me, and as they carried me towards the cliff, I congratulated myself not a little on the success of my scheme, for I knew that once in the water I should be safe, and could rejoin Jack and Peterkin in the cave. But my hopes were suddenly blasted by the captain crying out, "Hold on, lads, hold on! We'll give him a taste of the thumb-screws before throwing him to the sharks. Away with him into the boat. Look alive! the breeze is freshening."

The men instantly raised me shoulder high, and hurrying down the rocks, tossed me into the bottom of the boat, where I lay some time stunned with the violence of my fall.

On recovering sufficiently to raise myself on my elbow, I perceived that we were already outside the coral reef, and close alongside the schooner, which was of small size and clipper built. I had only time to observe this much, when I received a severe kick on the side from one of the men, who ordered me, in a rough voice, to jump aboard. rising hastily, I clambered up the side. In a few minutes the boat was hoisted on deck, the vessel's head put close to the wind, and the Coral Island dropped slowly astern as we beat up against a head sea.

Immediately after coming aboard, the crew were too busily engaged

in working the ship and getting in the boat to attend to me, so I remained leaning against the bulwarks close to the gangway, watching their operations. I was surprised to find that there were no guns or carronades of any kind in the vessel, which had more of the appearance of a fast-sailing trader than a pirate. But I was struck with the neatness of everything. The brass work of the binnacle and about the tiller, as well as the copper belaying-pins, were as brightly polished as if they had just come from the foundry. The decks were pure white, and smooth. The masts were clean-scraped and varnished, except at the cross-trees and truck, which were painted black. The standing and running rigging was in the most perfect order, and the sails white as snow. In short, everything, from the single narrow red stripe on her low black hull to the trucks on her tapering masts, evinced an amount of care and strict discipline that would have done credit to a ship of the Royal Navy. There was nothing lumbering or unseemly about the vessel, excepting perhaps, a boat, which lay on the deck with its keel up between the fore and main masts. It seemed disproportionately large for the schooner; but when I saw the crew amounted to between thirty and forty men, I concluded that this boat was held in reserve in case of any accident compelling the crew to desert the vessel.

As I have before said, the costumes of the men were similar to that of the captain. But in head gear they differed not only from him but from each other, some wearing the ordinary straw hat of the merchant service, while others wore cloth caps and red worsted night-caps. I observed that all their arms were sent below; the captain only retaining his cutlass and a single pistol in the folds of his shawl. Although the captain was the tallest and most powerful man in the ship, he did not strikingly excel many of his men in this respect, and the only difference that an ordinary observer would have noticed was a certain degree of open candour, straightforward daring, in the bold, ferocious expression of his face, which rendered him less repulsive than his low-browed associates, but did not by any means induce the belief that he was a hero. This look was, however, the indication of that spirit which gave him the pre-eminence among the crew of desperadoes who called him captain. He was a lion-like villain; totally devoid of personal fear, and utterly reckless of consequences, and therefore a terror to his men, who individually hated him, but unitedly felt it to be to their advantage to have him at their head.

But my thoughts soon reverted to the dear companions whom I had left on shore, and as I turned towards the Coral Island, which was now far away to leeward, I sighed deeply, and the tears rolled slowly down my cheeks as I thought that I might never see them more.

"So you're blubbering, are you, you obstinate whelp?" said the deep voice of the captain, as he came up and gave me a box on the ear that nearly felled me on the deck. "I don't allow any such weakness aboard o' this ship. So clap a stopper on your eyes, or I'll give you something to cry for."

I flushed with indignation at this rough and cruel treatment, but felt that giving way to anger would only make matters worse, so I made no reply, but took out my handkerchief and dried my eyes.

"I thought you were made of better stuff," continued the captain,

angrily. "I'd rather have a mad bull-dog aboard than a water-eyed puppy. But I'll cure you, lad, or introduce you to the sharks before long. Now go below, and stay there till I call you."

As I walked forward to obey, my eye fell on a small keg standing by the side of the main-mast, on which the word *gunpowder* was written in pencil. It immediately flashed across me that, as we were beating up against the wind, anything floating in the sea would be driven on the reef encircling the Coral Island. I also recollected—for thought is more rapid than the lightning—that my old companions had a pistol. Without a moment's hesitation, therefore, I lifted the keg from the deck and tossed it into the sea! An exclamation of surprise burst from the captain and some of the men who witnessed this act of mine.

Striding up to me, and uttering fearful imprecations, the captain raised his hand to strike me, while he shouted, "Boy! whelp! what mean you by that?"

"If you lower your hand," said I, in a loud voice, while I felt the blood rush to my temples, "I'll tell you. Until you do so I'm dumb."

The captain stepped back and regarded me with a look of amazement.

"Now," continued I, "I threw that keg into the sea because the wind and waves will carry it to my friends on the Coral Island, who happen to have a pistol but no powder. I hope that it will reach them soon; and my only regret is that the keg was not a bigger one. Moreover, pirate, you said just now that you thought I was made of better stuff. I don't know what stuff I am made of—I never thought much about that subject—but I'm quite certain of this, that I am made of such stuff as the like of you shall never tame, though you should do your worst."

To my surprise the captain, instead of flying into a rage, smiled, and thrusting his hand into the voluminous shawl that encircled his waist, turned on his heel and walked aft, while I went below.

Here, instead of being rudely handled, as I had expected, the men received me with a shout of laughter, and one of them, patting me on the back, said, "Well done, lad! you're a brick, and I have no doubt will turn out a rare cove. Bloody Bill there was just such a fellow as you are, and he's now the biggest cut-throat of us all."

"Take a can of beer, lad," cried another, "and wet your whistle after that speech to the captain. If any o' us had made it, youngster, he would have had no whistle to wet by this time."

"Stop your clapper, Jack," vociferated a third. "Give the boy a junk o' meat. Don't you see he's a'most goin' to kick the bucket?"

"And no wonder," said the first speaker, with an oath, "after the tumble you gave him into the boat. I guess it would have broke *your* neck if you had got it."

I indeed felt somewhat faint, which was owing, doubtless, to the combined effects of ill-usage and hunger; for it will be recollected that I had dived out of the cave that morning before breakfast, and it was now near mid-day. I therefore gladly accepted a plate of boiled pork and a yam, which were handed to me by one of the men from the locker on which some of the crew were seated eating their dinner. But I must add that the zest with which I ate

my meal was much abated in consequence of the frightful oaths and the terrible language that flowed from the lips of these godless men, even in the midst of their hilarity and good-humour. The man who had been alluded to as Bloody Bill was seated near me, and I could not help wondering at the moody silence he maintained among his comrades. He did indeed reply to their questions in a careless, off-hand tone, but he never volunteered a remark. The only difference between him and the others was his taciturnity and his size, for he was nearly, if not quite, as large a man as the captain.

During the remainder of the afternoon I was left to my own reflections, which were anything but agreeable; for I could not banish from my mind the threat about the thumb-screws, of the nature and use of which I had a vague but terrible conception. I was still meditating on my unhappy fate, when, just after nightfall, one of the watch on deck called down the hatchway,—

"Hallo there! one o' you tumble up and light the cabin lamp, and send that boy aft to the captain—sharp!"

"Now then, do you hear, youngster? the captain wants you. Look alive," said Bloody Bill, raising his huge frame from the locker on which he had been asleep for the last two hours. He sprang up the ladder, and I instantly followed him, and going aft was shown into the cabin by one of the men, who closed the door after me.

A small silver lamp which hung from a beam threw a dim soft light over the cabin, which was a small apartment, and comfortably but plainly furnished. Seated on a camp-stool at the table, and busily engaged in examining a chart of the Pacific, was the captain, who looked up as I entered, and in a quiet voice bade me be seated, while he threw down his pencil, and rising from the table, stretched himself on a sofa at the upper end of the cabin.

"Boy," said he, looking me full in the face, "what is your name?"

"Ralph Rover," I replied.

"Where did you come from, and how came you to be on that island? How many companions had you on it? Answer me, now, and mind you tell no lies."

"I never tell lies," said I firmly.

The captain received this reply with a cold, sarcastic smile, and bade me answer his questions.

I then told him the history of myself and my companions from the time we sailed till the day of his visit to the island, taking care, however, to make no mention of the Diamond Cave. After I had concluded, he was silent for a few minutes; then looking up, he said, "Boy, I believe you."

I was surprised at this remark, for I could not imagine why he should not believe me. However, I made no reply.

"And what," continued the captain, "makes you think that this schooner is a pirate?"

"The black flag," said I, "showed me what you are; and if any further proof were wanting, I have had it in the brutal treatment I have received at your hands."

The captain frowned as I spoke, but subduing his anger he continued, "Boy, you are too bold. I admit that we treated you roughly, but that was because you made us lose time and gave us a good deal of trouble. As to the black flag, that is merely a joke that my fellows play off upon people sometimes in order to frighten them. It is their

humour, and does no harm. I am no pirate, boy, but a lawful trader—a rough one, I grant you, but one can't help that in these seas, where there are so many pirates on the water and such murderous blackguards on the land. I carry on a trade in sandal-wood with the Feejee Islands; and if you choose, Ralph, to behave yourself and be a good boy, I'll take you along with me and give you a good share of the profits. You see I'm in want of an honest boy like you to look after the cabin and keep the log and superintend the traffic on shore sometimes. What say you, Ralph, would you like to become a sandal-wood trader?"

I was much surprised by this explanation, and a good deal relieved to find that the vessel, after all, was not a pirate; but instead of replying I said, "If it be as you state, then why did you take me from my island, and why did you not now take me back?"

The captain smiled as he replied, "I took you off in anger, boy, and I'm sorry for it. I would even now take you back, but we are too far away from it. See, there it is," he added, laying his finger on the chart, "and we are now here—fifty miles at least. It would not be fair to my men to put about now, for they have all an interest in the trade."

I could make no reply to this; so, after a little more conversation, I agreed to become one of the crew, at least until we could reach some civilized island where I might be put ashore. The captain assented to this proposition, and after thanking him for the promise, I left the cabin and went on deck with feelings that ought to have been lighter, but which were I could not tell why, marvellously heavy and uncomfortable still.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Bloody Bill—Dark surmises—A strange sail, and a strange crew, and a still stranger cargo—New reasons for favouring missionaries—A murderous massacre, and thoughts thereon.

THREE weeks after the conversation narrated in the last chapter, I was standing on the quarter-deck of the schooner watching the gambols of a shoal of porpoises that swam round us. It was a dead calm—one of those still, hot, sweltering days so common in the Pacific when nature seems to have gone to sleep, and the only thing in water or in air that proves her still alive is her long, deep breathing in the swell of the mighty sea. No cloud floated in the deep blue above, no ripple broke the reflected blue below. The sun shone fiercely in the sky, and a ball of fire blazed with almost equal power from out the bosom of the water. So intensely still was it, and so perfectly transparent was the surface of the deep, that had it not been for the long swell already alluded to, we might have believed the surrounding universe to be a huge blue liquid ball, and our little ship the one solitary material speck in all creation, floating in the midst of it.

No sound broke on our ears save the soft puff now and then of a porpoise, the slow creak of the masts as we swayed gently on the swell, the patter of the reef-points, and the occasional flap of the hanging sails. An awning covered the fore and after parts of the schooner, under which the men composing the watch on deck lolled in sleepy indolence, overcome with excessive heat. Bloody Bill, as

the men invariably called him, was standing at the tiller ; but his post for the present was a sinecure, and he whiled away the time by alternately gazing in dreamy abstraction at the compass in the binnacle, and by walking to the taffrail in order to spit into the sea. In one of these turns he came near to where I was standing, and leaning over the side, looked long and earnestly down into the blue wave.

This man, although he was always taciturn and often surly, was the only human being on board with whom I had the slightest desire to become better acquainted. The other men, seeing that I did not relish their company, and knowing that I was a *protégé* of the captain, treated me with total indifference. Bloody Bill, it is true, did the same ; but as this was his conduct to every one else, it was not peculiar in reference to me. Once or twice I tried to draw him into conversation, but he always turned away after a few cold monosyllables. As he now leaned over the taffrail close beside me, I said to him,—

"Bill, why is it that you are so gloomy ? Why do you never speak to any one ?"

Bill smiled slightly as he replied, "Why, I s'pose it's because I hain't got nothin' to say !"

"That's strange," said I, musingly ; "you look like a man that could think, and such men can usually speak."

"So they can, youngster," rejoined Bill, somewhat sternly ; "and I could speak too if I had a mind to, but what's the use o' speaking here ? The men only open their mouths to curse and swear, an' they seem to find it entertainin' ; but I don't, so I hold my tongue."

"Well, Bill, that's true, and I would rather not hear you speak at all than hear you speak like the other men ; but I don't swear, Bill, so you might talk to me sometimes, I think. Besides, I'm weary of spending day after day in this way, without a single soul to say a pleasant word to. I've been used to friendly conversation, Bill, and I really would take it kind if you would talk with me a little now and then."

Bill looked at me in surprise, and I thought I observed a sad expression pass across his sun-burned face.

"An' where have you been used to friendly conversation ?" said Bill, looking down again into the sea ; "not on that Coral Island, I take it ?"

"Yes, indeed," said I energetically. "I have spent many of the happiest months in my life on that Coral Island ;" and without waiting to be further questioned, I launched out into a glowing account of the happy life that Jack and Peterkin and I had spent together, and related minutely every circumstance that befell us while on the island.

"Boy, Boy," said Bill, in a voice so deep that it startled me, "this is no place for you."

"That's true," said I. "I am of little use on board, and I don't like my comrades ; but I can't help it, and at any rate I hope to be free again soon."

"Free ?" said Bill, looking at me in surprise.

"Yes, free," returned I : "the captain said he would put me ashore after this trip was over."

"*This trip !* Hark'ee, boy," said Bill, lowering his voice, "what said the captain to you the day you came aboard ?"

"He said that he was a trader in sandal-wood, and no pirate, and told me that if I would join him for this trip he would give me a good share of the profits or put me on shore in some civilized island if I chose."

Bill's brows lowered savagely as he muttered, "Ay, he said truth when he told you he was a sandal-wood trader, but he lied when—"

"Sail ho!" shouted the look-out at the masthead.

"Where away?" cried Bill, springing to the tiller; while the men, startled by the sudden cry, jumped up and gazed round the horizon.

"On the starboard quarter, hull down, sir," answered the look-out.

At this moment the captain came on deck, and mounting into the rigging, surveyed the sail through the glass. Then sweeping his eye round the horizon, he gazed steadily at a particular point.

"Take in top-sails," shouted the captain, swinging himself down on the deck by the main-back stay.

"Take in top-sails," roared the first mate.

"Ay, ay, sir-r-r," answered the men, as they sprang into the rigging and went aloft like cats.

Instantly all was bustle on board the hitherto quiet schooner. The top-sails were taken in and stowed, the men stood by the sheets and halyards, and the captain gazed anxiously at the breeze which was now rushing towards us like a sheet of dark blue. In a few seconds it struck us. The schooner trembled as if in surprise at the sudden onset, while she fell away, then bending gracefully to the wind, as though in acknowledgement of her subjection, she cut through the waves with her sharp prow like a dolphin, while Bill directed her course towards the strange sail.

In half-an-hour we neared her sufficiently to make out that she was a schooner, and from the clumsy appearance of her masts and sails we judged her to be a trader. She evidently did not like our appearance, for the instant the breeze reached her she crowded all sail and showed us her stern. As the breeze had moderated a little, our top-sails were again shaken out, and it soon became evident—despite the proverb, "A stern chase is a long one"—that we doubled her speed and would over-haul her speedily. When within a mile we hoisted British colours, but receiving no acknowledgement, the captain ordered a shot to be fired across her bows. In a moment, to my surprise, a large portion of the bottom of the boat amidships was removed, and in the hole thus exposed appeared an immense brass gun. It worked on a swivel, and was elevated by means of machinery. It was quickly loaded and fired. The heavy ball struck the water a few yards ahead of the chase, and ricochetting into the air, plunged into the sea a mile beyond it.

This produced the desired effect. The strange vessel backed her top-sails and hove to, while we ranged up and lay to about a hundred yards off.

"Lower the boat," cried the captain.

In a second the boat was lowered and manned by a part of the crew, who were all armed with cutlasses and pistols. As the captain passed me to get into it, he said, "Jump into the stern sheets, Ralph; I may want you." I obeyed, and in ten minutes more we were standing on the stranger's deck. We were all much surprised at the sight that met our eyes. Instead of a crew of such sailors as we were accustomed to see, there were only fifteen blacks, standing on the

quarter-deck and regarding us with looks of undisguised alarm. They were totally unarmed, and most of them unclothed; one or two, however, wore portions of European attire. One had on a pair of duck trousers which were much too large for him, and stuck out in a most ungainly manner. Another wore nothing but the common scanty native garment round the loins and a black beaver hat. But the most ludicrous personage of all, and one who seemed to be chief, was a tall middle-aged man, of a mild, simple expression of countenance, who wore a white cotton shirt, a swallow-tailed coat, and a straw hat, while his black brawny legs were totally uncovered below the knees.

"Where's the commander of this ship?" inquired our captain, stepping up to this individual.

"I is capin," he answered, taking off his straw hat and making a low bow.

"You!" said our captain, in surprise. "Where do you come from, and where are you bound? What cargo have you aboard?"

"We is come," answered the man with the swallow-tail, "from Aitutaki; we was go for Rarotonga. We is native miss'nary ship; our name is de *Olive Branch*; an' our cargo is two tons cocoa-nuts, seventy pigs, twenty cats, and de Gosp'l."

This announcement was received by the crew of our vessel with a shout of laughter, which, however, was peremptorily checked by the captain, whose expression instantly changed from one of severity to that of frank urbanity as he advanced towards the missionary and shook him warmly by the hand.

"I am very glad to have fallen in with you," said he, "and I wish you much success in your missionary labours. Pray take me to your cabin, as I wish to converse with you privately."

The missionary immediately took him by the hand, and as he led him away I heard him saying, "Me most glad to find you trader; we t'ought you be pirate. You very like one 'bout the masts."

What conversation the captain had with this man I never heard, but he came on deck again in a quarter of an hour, and shaking hands cordially with the missionary, ordered us into our boat and returned to the schooner, which was immediately put before the wind. In a few minutes the *Olive Branch* was left far behind us.

That afternoon, as I was down below at dinner, I heard the men talking about this curious ship.

"I wonder," said one, "why our captain looked so sweet on yon swallow-tailed super-cargo o' pigs and Gospels. If it had been an ordinary trader, now, he would have taken as many o' the pigs as he required and sent the ship with all on board to the bottom."

"Why, Dick, you must be new to these seas if you don't know that," cried another. "The captain cares as much for the Gospel as you do (an' that's precious little), but he knows, and everybody knows, that the only place among the southern islands where a ship can put in and get what she wants in comfort is where the Gospel has been sent to. There are hundreds o' islands, at this blessed moment, where you might as well jump straight into a shark's maw as land without a band o' thirty comrades armed to the teeth to back you."

"Ay," said a man with a deep scar over his right eye, "Dick's new to the work. But if the captain takes us for a cargo o' sandal-wood to the Feejees, he'll get a taste o' these black gentry in their native

condition. For my part, I don't know and I don't care what the Gospel does to them, but I know that when any o' the islands chance to get it, trade goes all smooth and easy ; but where they ha'n't got it, Beelzebub himself could hardly desire better company."

"Well, you ought to be a good judge," cried another, laughing, "for you've never kept any company but the worst all your life!"

"Ralph Rover!" shouted a voice down the hatchway, "captain wants you aft."

Springing up the ladder, I hastened to the cabin, pondering as I went the strange testimony borne by these men to the effect of the Gospel on savage natures—testimony which, as it was perfectly disinterested, I had no doubt whatever was strictly true.

On coming again on deck I found Bloody Bill at the helm, and as we were alone together I tried to draw him into conversation. After repeating to him the conversation in the forecabin about the missionaries, I said,—

"Tell me, Bill, is this schooner really a trader in sandal-wood?"

"Yes, Ralph, she is ; but she's just as really a pirate. The black flag you saw flying at the peak was no deception."

"Then how can you say she's a trader?" asked I.

"Why, as to that, she trades when she can't take by force ; but she takes by force when she can, in preference. "Ralph," he added, lowering his voice, "if you had seen the bloody deeds that I have witnessed done on these decks, you would not need to ask if we were pirates. But you'll find it out soon enough. As for the missionaries, the captain favours them because they are useful to him. The South Sea islanders are such incarnate fiends that they are the better of being tamed, and the missionaries are the only men who can do it."

Our track after this lay through several clusters of small islets, among which we were becalmed more than once. During this part of our voyage the watch on deck and the look-out at the masthead were more than usually vigilant, as we were not only in danger of being attacked by the natives, who, I learned from the captain's remarks, were a bloody and deceitful tribe at this group, but we were also exposed to much risk from the multitudes of coral reefs that rose up in the channels between the islands, some of them just above the surface, others a few feet below it. Our precautions against the savages I found were indeed necessary.

One day we were becalmed among a group of small islands, most of which appeared to be uninhabited. As we were in want of fresh water, the captain sent the boat ashore to bring off a cask or two. But we were mistaken in thinking there were no natives ; for scarcely had we drawn near to the shore when a band of naked blacks rushed out of the bush and assembled on the beach, brandishing their clubs and spears in a threatening manner. Our men were well armed, but refrained from showing any signs of hostility, and rowed nearer in order to converse with the natives ; and I now found that more than one of the crew could imperfectly speak dialects of the language peculiar to the South Sea islanders. When within forty yards of the shore, we ceased rowing, and the first mate stood up to address the multitude ; but instead of answering us, they replied with a shower of stones, some of which cut the men severely. Instantly our muskets were levelled, and a volley was about to be fired, when the

captain hailed us in a loud voice from the schooner, which lay not more than five or six hundred yards off the shore.

"Don't fire!" he shouted angrily. "Pull off to the point ahead of you."

The men looked surprised at this order, and uttered deep curses as they prepared to obey, for their wrath was roused and they burned for revenge. Three or four of them hesitated, and seemed disposed to mutiny.

"Don't distress yourselves, lads," said the mate, while a bitter smile curled his lip. "Obey orders. The captain's not the man to take an insult tamely. If Long Tom does not speak presently I'll give myself to the sharks."

The men smiled significantly as they pulled from the shore, which was now crowded with a dense mass of savages, amounting probably to five or six hundred. We had not rowed off above a couple of hundred yards when a loud roar thundered over the sea, and the big brass gun sent a withering shower of grape point-blank into the midst of the living mass, through which a wide lane was cut, while a yell, the like of which I could not have imagined, burst from the miserable survivors as they fled to the woods. Amongst the heaps of dead that lay on the sand just where they had fallen, I could distinguish mutilated forms writhing in agony, while ever and anon one and another rose convulsively from out the mass, endeavoured to stagger towards the wood, and ere they had taken a few steps, fell and wallowed on the bloody sand. My blood curdled within me as I witnessed this frightful and wanton slaughter; but I had little time to think, for the captain's deep voice came again over the water towards us: "Pull ashore, lads, and fill your water-casks." The men obeyed in silence, and it seemed to me as if even their hard hearts were shocked by the ruthless deed. On gaining the mouth of the rivulet at which we intended to take in water, we found it flowing with blood, for the greater part of those who were slain had been standing on the banks of the stream, a short way above its mouth. Many of the wretched creatures had fallen into it, and we found one body, which had been carried down, jammed between two rocks, with the staring eyeballs turned towards us, and his black hair waving in the ripples of the blood-red stream. No one dared to oppose our landing now, so we carried our casks to a pool above the murdered group, and having filled them, returned on board. Fortunately a breeze sprang up soon afterwards and carried us away from the dreadful spot; but it could not waft me away from the memory of what I had seen.

"And this," thought I, gazing in horror at the captain, who, with a quiet look of indifference, leaned upon the taffrail smoking a cigar and contemplating the fertile green islets as they passed like a lovely picture before our eyes—"this is the man who favours the missionaries because they are useful to him and can tame the savages better than any one else can do it!" Then I wondered in my mind whether it were possible for any missionary to tame *him*!

CHAPTER XXIV.

Bloody Bill is communicative and sagacious—Unpleasant prospects—Retrospective meditations interrupted by volcanic agency—The pirates negotiate with a Feejee chief—Various etceteras that are calculated to surprise and horrify.

It was many days after the events just narrated ere I recovered a little of my wonted spirits. I could not shake off the feeling for a long time that I was in a frightful dream, and the sight of our captain filled me with so much horror that I kept out of his way as much as my duties about the cabin would permit. Fortunately he took so little notice of me that he did not observe my changed feelings towards him, otherwise it might have been worse for me.

But I was now resolved that I would run away the very first island we should land at, and commit myself to the hospitality of the natives rather than remain an hour longer than I could help in the pirate schooner. I pondered this subject a good deal, and at last made up my mind to communicate my intention to Bloody Bill; for during several talks I had had with him of late, I felt assured that he too would willingly escape if possible. When I told him of my design he shook his head. "No, no, Ralph," said he, "you must not think of running away here. Among some of the groups of islands you might do so with safety, but if you tried it here you would find that you had jumped out of the fryin'-pan into the fire."

"How so, Bill?" said I; "would the natives not receive me?"

"That they would, lad; but they would eat you too."

"Eat me!" said I, in surprise; "I thought the South Sea islanders never ate anybody except their enemies."

"Humph!" ejaculated Bill. "I s'pose 'twas yer tender-hearted friends in England that put that notion into your head. There's a set o' soft-hearted folk at home that I knows on who don't like to have their feelin's ruffled, and when you tell them anything they don't like—that shocks them, as they call it—no matter how true it be, they stop their ears and cry out, 'Oh, that is too horrible! We can't believe that!' An' they say truth. They can't believe it 'cause they won't believe it. Now, I believe there's thousands o' the people in England who are sich born drivellin' *won't-believers* that they think the black fellows hereaway at the worst eat an enemy only now an' then, out o' spite; whereas I know for certain, and many captains of the British and American navies know as well as me, that the Feejee islanders eat not only their enemies but one another; and they do it not for spite, but for pleasure. It's a *fact* that they prefer human flesh to any other. But they don't like white men's flesh so well as black; they say it makes them sick."

"Why, Bill," said I, "you told me just now that they would eat *me* if they caught me."

"So I did, and so I think they would. I've only heard some o' them say they don't like white men *so well* as black; but if they was hungry they wouldn't be particular. Anyhow, I'm sure they would kill you. You see, Ralph, I've been a good while in them parts, and I've visited the different groups of islands oftentimes as a trader. And thorough-goin' blackguards some o' them traders are; no better than pirates, I can tell you. One captain that I sailed with was not

a chip better than the one we're with now. He was trading with a friendly chief one day, aboard his vessel. The chief had swum off to us with the things for trade tied atop of his head, for them chaps are like otters in the water. Well, the chief was hard on the captain, and would not part with some o' his things. When their bargainin' was over they shook hands, and the chief jumped overboard to swim ashore; but before he got forty yards from the ship the captain seized a musket and shot him dead. He then hove up anchor and put to sea, and as we sailed along shore, he dropped six black fellows with his rifle remarkin' that 'that would spoil the trade for the next comers.' But, as I was sayin', I'm up to the ways o' these fellows. One o' the laws o' the country is, that every shipwrecked person who happens to be cast ashore, be he dead or alive, is doomed to be roasted and eaten. There was a small tradin' schooner wrecked off one of these islands when we were lyin' there in harbour during a storm. The crew was lost, all but three men, who swam ashore. The moment they landed they were seized by the natives and carried up into the woods. We knew pretty well what their fate would be, but we could not help them, for our crew was small, and if we had gone ashore they would likely have killed us all. We never saw the three men again; but we heard frightful yelling and dancing and merry-making that night; and one of the natives, who came aboard to trade with us next day, told us that the *long pigs*, as he called the men, had been roasted and eaten, and their bones were to be converted into sail-needles. He also said that white men were bad to eat, and that most o' the people on shore were sick."

I was very much shocked and cast down in my mind at this terrible account of the natives, and asked Bill what he would advise me to do. Looking round the deck to make sure that we were not overheard, he lowered his voice and said, "There are two or three ways that we might escape, Ralph, but none o' them's easy. If the captain would only sail for some o' the islands near Tahiti, we might run away there well enough, because the natives are all Christians; an' we find that wherever the savages take up with Christianity they always give over their bloody ways, and are safe to be trusted. I never cared for Christianity myself," he continued, in a soliloquizing voice, "and I don't well know what it means; but a man with half an eye can see what it does for these black critters. However, the captain always keeps a sharp look-out after us when we get to these islands, for he half suspects that one or two o' us are tired of his company. Then we might manage to cut the boat adrift some fine night when it's our watch on deck, and clear off before they discovered that we were gone. But we would run the risk o' bein' caught by the blacks. I wouldn't like to try that plan. But you and I will think over it, Ralph, and see what's to be done. In the meantime it's our watch below, so I'll go and turn in."

Bill then bade me good-night, and went below, while a comrade took his place at the helm; but feeling no desire to enter into conversation with him, I walked aft, and leaning over the stern, looked down into the phosphorescent waves that gurgled around the rudder, and streamed out like a flame of blue light in the vessel's wake. My thoughts were very sad, and I could scarce refrain from tears as I contrasted my present wretched position with the happy, peaceful time I had spent on the Coral Island with my dear com-

panions. As I thought upon Jack and Peterkin anxious forebodings crossed my mind, and I pictured to myself the grief and dismay with which they would search every nook and corner of the island, in a vain attempt to discover my dead body; for I felt assured that if they did not see any sign of the pirate schooner or boat when they came out of the cave to look for me, they would never imagine that I had been carried away. I wondered, too, how Jack would succeed in getting Peterkin out of the cave without my assistance; and I trembled when I thought that he might lose presence of mind, and begin to kick when he was in the tunnel! These thoughts were suddenly interrupted and put to flight by a bright red blaze which lighted up the horizon to the southward and cast a crimson glow far over the sea. This appearance was accompanied by a low growling sound, as of distant thunder, and at the same time the sky above us became black, while a hot stifling wind blew around us in fitful gusts.

The crew assembled hastily on deck, and most of them were under the belief that a frightful hurricane was pending; but the captain coming on deck, soon explained the phenomena.

"It's only a volcano," said he. "I knew there was one hereabouts, but thought it was extinct.—Up there and furl top-gallant-sails; we'll likely have a breeze, and it's well to be ready."

As he spoke a shower began to fall, which we quickly observed was not rain but fine ashes. As we were many miles distant from the volcano, these must have been carried to us from it by the wind. As the captain had predicted, a stiff breeze soon afterwards sprang up, under the influence of which we speedily left the volcano far behind us; but during the greater part of the night we could see its lurid glare and hear its distant thunder. The shower did not cease to fall for several hours, and we must have sailed under it for nearly forty miles, perhaps farther. When we emerged from the cloud, our decks and every part of the rigging were completely covered with a thick coat of ashes. I was much interested in this, and recollected that Jack had often spoken of many of the islands of the Pacific as being volcanoes, either active or extinct, and had said that the whole region was more or less volcanic, and that some scientific men were of opinion that the islands of the Pacific were nothing more or less than the mountain tops of a huge continent which had sunk under the influence of volcanic agency.

Three days after passing the volcano, we found ourselves a few miles to windward of an island of considerable size and luxuriant aspect. It consisted of two mountains, which seemed to be nearly four thousand feet high. They were separated from each other by a broad valley, whose thick-growing trees ascended a considerable distance up the mountain sides; and rich level plains, or meadowland, spread round the base of the mountains, except at the point immediately opposite the large valley, where a river seemed to carry the trees, as it were, along with it down to the white sandy shore. The mountain tops, unlike those of our Coral Island, were sharp, needle-shaped, and bare, while their sides were more rugged and grand in outline than anything I had yet seen in those seas. Bloody Bill was beside me when the island first hove in sight.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "I know that island well. They call it Emo."

"Have you been there before, then?" I inquired.

"Ay, that I have, often, and so has this schooner. 'Tis a famous island for sandal-wood. We have taken many cargoes off it already, and have paid for them too; for the savages are so numerous that we dared not try to take it by force. But our captain has tried to cheat them so often that they're beginnin' not to like us overmuch now. Besides, the men behaved ill the last time we were here, and I wonder the captain is not afraid to venture. But he's afraid o' nothing earthly, I believe."

We soon ran inside the barrier coral-reef, and let go our anchor in six fathoms water, just opposite the mouth of a small creek, whose shores were densely covered with mangrovès and tall umbrageous trees. The principal village of the natives lay about half-a-mile from this point. Ordering the boat out, the captain jumped into it, and ordered me to follow him. The men, fifteen in number, were well armed; and the mate was directed to have Long Tom ready for emergencies.

"Give way, lads," cried the captain.

The oars fell into the water at the word, the boat shot from the schooner's side, and in a few minutes reached the shore. Here, contrary to our expectation, we were met with the utmost cordiality by Romata, the principal chief of the island, who conducted us to his house and gave us mats to sit upon. I observed in passing that the natives, of whom there were two or three thousand, were totally unarmed.

After a short preliminary palaver, a feast of baked pigs and and various roots was spread before us; of which we partook sparingly, and then proceeded to business. The captain stated his object in visiting the island, regretted that there had been a slight misunderstanding during the last visit, and hoped that no ill-will was borne by either party, and that a satisfactory trade would be accomplished.

Romata answered that he had forgotten there had been any differences between them, protested that he was delighted to see his friends again, and assured them they should have every assistance in cutting and embarking the wood. The terms were afterwards agreed on, and we rose to depart. All this conversation was afterwards explained to me by Bill, who understood the language pretty well.

Romata accompanied us on board, and explained that a great chief from another island was then on a visit to him, and that he was to be ceremoniously entertained on the following day. After begging to be allowed to introduce him to us, and receiving permission, he sent his canoe ashore to bring him off. At the same time he gave orders to bring on board his two favourites, a cock and a paroquet. While the canoe was gone on this errand, I had time to regard the savage chief attentively. He was a man of immense size, with massive but beautifully moulded limbs and figure, only parts of which, the broad chest and muscular arms, were uncovered; for although the lower orders generally wore no other clothing than a strip of cloth called *maro* round their loins, the chief, on particular occasions, wrapped his person in voluminous folds of a species of native cloth made from the bark of the Chinese paper-mulberry. Romata wore a magnificent black beard and moustache, and his hair was frizzed out to such an extent that it resembled a large turban,

in which was stuck a long wooden pin! I afterwards found that this pin served for scratching the head, for which purpose the fingers were too short without disarranging the hair. But Romata put himself to much greater inconvenience on account of his hair, for we found that he slept with his head resting on a wooden pillow, in which was cut a hollow for the neck, so that the hair of the sleeper might not be disarranged.

In ten minutes the canoe returned, bringing the other chief, who certainly presented a most extraordinary appearance, having painted one half of his face red and the other half yellow, besides ornamenting it with various designs in black! Otherwise he was much the same in appearance as Romata, though not so powerfully built. As this chief had never seen a ship before, except, perchance, some of the petty traders that at long intervals visit these remote islands, he was much taken up with the neatness and beauty of all the fittings of the schooner. He was particularly struck with a musket which was shown to him, and asked where the white men got hatchets hard enough to cut the tree of which the barrel was made! While he was thus engaged, his brother chief stood aloof, talking with the captain, and fondling a superb cock and a little blue-headed parouquet, the favourites of which I have before spoken. I observed that all the other natives walked in a crouching posture while in the presence of Romata. Before our guests left us, the captain ordered the brass gun to be uncovered and fired for their gratification; and I have every reason to believe he did so for the purpose of showing our superior power, in case the natives should harbour any evil designs against us. Romata had never seen this gun before, as it had not been uncovered on previous visits, and the astonishment with which he viewed it was very amusing. Being desirous of knowing its power, he begged that the captain would fire it. So a shot was put into it. The chiefs were then directed to look at a rock about two miles out at sea, and the gun was fired. In a second the top of the rock was seen to burst asunder, and to fall in fragments into the sea.

Romata was so delighted with the success of this shot, that he pointed to a man who was walking on the shore, and begged the captain to fire at him, evidently supposing that his permission was quite sufficient to justify the captain in such an act. He was therefore surprised, and not a little annoyed, when the captain refused to fire at the native, and ordered the gun to be housed.

Of all the things, however, that afforded matter of amusement to these savages, that which pleased Romata's visitor most was the ship's pump. He never tired of examining it and pumping up the water. Indeed, so much was he taken up with this pump, that he could not be prevailed on to return on shore, but sent a canoe to fetch his favourite stool, on which he seated himself, and spent the remainder of the day in pumping the bilge-water out of the ship!

Next day the crew went ashore to cut sandal-wood, while the captain, with one or two men, remained on board, in order to be ready, if need be, with the brass gun, which was unhoused and conspicuously elevated, with its capacious muzzle directed point-blank at the chief's house. The men were fully armed as usual; and the captain ordered me to go with them, to assist in the work. I was much pleased with this order, for it freed me from the captain's

company, which I could not now endure, and it gave me an opportunity of seeing the natives.

As we wound along in single file through the rich fragrant groves of banana, cocoa-nut, bread-fruit, and other trees, I observed that there were many of the plum and banian trees, with which I had become familiar on the Coral Island. I noticed also large quantities of taro-roots, yams, and sweet potatoes growing in enclosures. On turning into an open glade of the woods, we came abruptly upon a cluster of native houses. They were built chiefly of bamboos, and were thatched with the large thick leaves of the pandanus; but many of them had little more than a sloping roof and three sides with an open front, being the most simple shelter from the weather that could well be imagined. Within these and around them were groups of natives—men, women, and children—who all stood up to gaze at us as we marched along, followed by the party of men whom the chief had sent to escort us. About half-a-mile inland we arrived at the spot where the sandal-wood grew, and while the men set to work I clambered up an adjoining hill to observe the country.

About mid-day the chief arrived with several followers, one of whom carried a baked pig on a wooden platter, with yams and potatoes on several plantain leaves, which he presented to the men, who sat down under the shade of a tree to dine. The chief sat down to dine also; but to my surprise, instead of feeding himself, one of his wives performed that office for him! I was seated beside Bill, and asked him the reason of this.

"It is beneath his dignity, I believe, to feed himself," answered Bill; "but I daresay he's not particular, except on great occasions. They've a strange custom among them, Ralph, which is called *tabu*, and they carry it to great lengths. If a man chooses a particular tree for his god, the fruit of that tree is tabued to him; and if he eats it, he is sure to be killed by his people, and eaten, of course, for killing means eating hereaway. Then, you see that great mob o' hair on the chief's head? Well, he has a lot o' barbers to keep it in order; and it's a law that whoever touches the head of a living chief or the body of a dead one, his hands are tabued; so in that way the barbers' hands are always tabued, and they daren't use them for their lives, but have to be fed like big babies, as they are, sure enough!"

"That's odd, Bill. But look there," said I, pointing to a man whose skin was of a much lighter colour than the generality of the natives. "I've seen a few of these light-skinned fellows among the Feejeeans. They seem to me to be of quite a different race."

"So they are," answered Bill. "These fellows come from Tongan Islands, which lie a long way to the eastward. They come here to build their big war-canoes; and as these take two and sometimes four years to build, there's always some o' the brown-skins among the black serpents o' these islands."

"By the way, Bill," said I, "your mentioning of serpents reminds me that I have not seen a reptile of any kind since I came to this part of the world."

"No more there are any," said Bill; "if ye except the niggers themselves, there's none on the islands but a lizard or two and some sich harmless things. But I never seed any myself. If there's none on the land, however, there's more than enough in the water, and that minds me of a wonderful brute they have here. But come I'll show it to you."

So saying, Bill arose, and leaving the men still busy with the baked pig, led me into the forest. After proceeding a short distance we came upon a small pond of stagnant water. A native lad had followed us, to whom we called and beckoned him to come to us. On Bill saying a few words to him, which I did not understand, the boy advanced to the edge of the pond, and gave a low, peculiar whistle. Immediately the water became agitated, and an enormous eel thrust its head above the surface and allowed the youth to touch it. It was about twelve feet long, and as thick round the body as a man's thigh.

"There!" said Bill, his lip curling with contempt; "what do you think of that for a god, Ralph? This is one o' their gods, and it has been fed with dozens o' livin' babies already. How many more it'll get afore it dies is hard to say."

"Babies!" said I, with an incredulous look.

"Ah, babies," returned Bill. "Your soft-hearted folk at home would say, 'Oh, horrible! impossible!' to that, and then go away as comfortable and unconcerned as if their sayin' 'Horrible! impossible!' had made it a lie. But I tell you, Ralph, it's a *fact*. I've seed it with my own eyes the last time I was here, an' mayhap if you stop a while at this accursed place, and keep a sharp look-out, you'll see it too. They don't feed it regularly with livin' babies, but they give it one now and then as a treat. Bah, you brute!" cried Bill in disgust, giving the reptile a kick on the snout with his heavy boot that sent it sweltering back in agony into its loathsome pool. I thought it lucky for Bill, indeed for all of us, that the native youth's back happened to be turned at the time; for I am certain that if the poor savages had come to know that we had so rudely handled their god we should have had to fight our way back to the ship. As we retraced our steps I questioned my companion further on this subject.

"How comes it, Bill, that the mothers allowed such a dreadful thing to be done?"

"Allow it? the mothers *do* it! It seems to me that there's nothing too fiendish or diabolical for these people to do. Why, in some of the islands they have an institution called the *Areoi*, and the persons connected with that body are ready for any wickedness that mortal man can devise. In fact they stick at nothing; and one o' their customs is to murder their infants the moment they are born. The mothers agree to it, and the fathers do it. And the mildest ways they have of murdering them is by sticking them through the body with sharp splinters of bamboo, strangling them with their thumbs, or burying them alive and stamping them to death while under the sod."

I felt sick at heart while my companion recited these horrors.

"But it's a curious fact," he continued, after a pause, during which we walked in silence towards the spot where we had left our comrades—"it's a curious fact, that wherever the missionaries get a footin' all these things come to an end at once, an' the savages take to doin' each other good and singin' psalms just like Methodists."

"God bless the missionaries!" said I, while a feeling of enthusiasm filled my heart, so that I could speak with difficulty. "God bless and prosper the missionaries till they get a footing in every island of the sea!"

"I would say Amen to that prayer, Ralph, if I could," said Bill, in a deep, sad voice; but it would be a mere mockery for a man to ask a blessing for others who dare not ask one for himself. But, Ralph,"

he continued, "I've not told you half o' the abominations I have seen durin' my life in these seas. If we pull long together, lad, I'll tell you more; and if times have not changed very much since I was here last, it's like that you'll have a chance o' seeing a little for yourself before long."

CHAPTER XXV.

The sandal-wood party—Native children's games somewhat surprising—Desperate amusements suddenly and fatally brought to a close—An old friend recognized—News—Romata's mad conduct.

NEXT day the wood-cutting party went ashore again, and I accompanied them as before. During the dinner-hour I wandered into the woods alone, being disinclined for food that day. I had not rambled far when I found myself unexpectedly on the sea-shore, having crossed a narrow neck of land which separated the native village from a large bay. Here I found a party of the islanders busy with one of their war-canoes, which was almost ready for launching. I stood for a long time watching this party with great interest, and observed that they fastened the timber and planks to each other very much in the same way in which I had seen Jack fasten those of our little boat. But what surprised me most was its immense length, which I measured very carefully, and found to be a hundred feet long; and it was so capacious that it could have held three hundred men. It had the unwieldy out-rigger and enormously high stern-posts which I had remarked on the canoe that came to us while I was on the Coral Island. Observing some boys playing at games a short way along the beach, I resolved to go and watch them; but as I turned from the natives who were engaged so busily and cheerfully at their work, I little thought of the terrible event that hung on the completion of that war-cane.

Advancing towards the children, who were so numerous that I began to think this must be the general play-ground of the village, I sat down on a grassy bank under the shade of a plantain-tree to watch them. And a happier and more noisy crew I have never seen. There were at least two hundred of them, both boys and girls, all of whom were clad in no other garments than their own glossy little black skins, except the maro, or strip of cloth round the loins of the boys and a very short petticoat or kilt on the girls. They did not all play at the same game, but amused themselves in different groups.

One band was busily engaged in a game exactly similar to our blind man's buff. Another set were walking on stilts, which raised the children three feet from the ground. They were very expert at this amusement, and seldom tumbled. In another place I observed a group of girls standing together, and apparently enjoying themselves very much; so I went up to see what they were doing, and found they were opening their eyelids with their fingers till their eyes appeared of an enormous size, and then thrusting pieces of straw between the upper and lower lids, across the eyeball to keep them in that position! This seemed to me, I must confess, a very foolish as well as dangerous amusement. Nevertheless the children seemed to be greatly delighted with the hideous faces they made. I pondered this subject a good deal, and thought that if little

children knew how silly they seemed to grown-up people when they make faces, they would not be so fond of doing it. In another place were a number of boys engaged in flying kites, and I could not help wondering that some of the games of those little savages should be so like to our own, although they had never seen us at play. But the kites were different from ours in many respects, being of every variety of shape. They were made of very thin cloth, and the boys raised them to a wonderful height in the air by means of twine made from the cocoa-nut husk. Other games there were, some of which showed the natural depravity of the hearts of these poor savages, and made me wish fervently that missionaries might be sent out to them. But the amusement which the greatest number of the children of both sexes seemed to take chief delight in, was swimming and diving in the sea, and the expertness which they exhibited was truly amazing. They seemed to have two principal games in the water, one of which was to dive off a sort of stage which had been erected near a deep part of the sea, and chase each other in the water. Some of them went down to an extraordinary depth; others skimmed along the surface, or rolled over and over like porpoises, or diving under each other, came up unexpectedly and pulled each other down by a leg or an arm. They never seemed to tire of this sport, and from the great heat of the water in the South Seas, they could remain in it nearly all day without feeling chilled. Many of these children were almost infants, scarce able to walk; yet they staggered down the beach, flung their round, fat little black bodies fearlessly into deep water, and struck out to sea with as much confidence as ducklings.

The other game to which I have referred was swimming in the surf. But as this is an amusement in which all engage, from children of ten to grey-haired men of sixty, and as I had an opportunity of witnessing it in perfection the day following, I shall describe it more minutely.

I suppose it was in honour of their guest that this grand swimming-match was got up, for Romata came and told the captain that they were going to engage in it, and begged him to "come and see."

"What sort of amusement is this surf-swimming?" I inquired of Bill, as we walked to a part of the shore on which several thousands of the natives were assembled.

"It's a very favourite lark with these 'xtr'or'nary critters," replied Bill, giving a turn to the quid of tobacco that invariably bulged out his left cheek. "Ye see, Ralph, them fellows take to the water as soon a'most as they can walk, an' long before they can do anything respectably, so that they are as much at home in the sea as on the land. Well, ye see, I'spose they found swimmin' for miles out to sea, and divin' fathoms deep, wasn't exciting enough, so they invented this game o' swimmin' on the surf. Each man and boy, as you see, has got a short board or plank, with which he swims out for a mile or more to sea, and then, gettin' on the top o' yon thunderin' breaker, they come to shore on the top of it, yellin' and screechin' like fiends. It's a marvel to me that they're not dashed to shivers on the coral reef, for sure an' sartin am I that if any o' us tried it, we wouldn't be worth the fluke of a broken anchor after the wave fell. But there they go!"

As he spoke, several hundreds of the natives, amongst whom we were now standing, uttered a loud yell, rushed down the beach, plunged into the surf, and were carried off by the seething foam of the retreating wave.

At the point where we stood, the encircling coral reef joined the shore, so that the magnificent breakers, which a recent stiff breeze had rendered larger than usual, fell in thunder at the feet of the multitudes who lined the beach. For some time the swimmers continued to strike out to sea, breasting over the swell like hundreds of black seals. Then they all turned, and watching an approaching billow, mounted its white crest, and each laying his breast on the short flat board, came rolling towards the shore, careering on the summit of the mighty wave, while they and the onlookers shouted and yelled with excitement. Just as the monster wave curled in solemn majesty to fling its bulky length upon the beach, most of the swimmers slid back into the trough behind; others, slipping off their boards, seized them in their hands, and plunging through the watery waste, swam out to repeat the amusement; but a few, who seemed to me the most reckless, continued their career until they were launched upon the beach, and enveloped in the churning foam and spray. One of these last came in on the crest of the wave most manfully, and landed with a violent bound almost on the spot where Bill and I stood. I saw by his peculiar head-dress that he was the chief whom the tribe entertained as their guest. The sea-water had removed nearly all the paint with which his face had been covered, and as he rose panting to his feet, I recognised, to my surprise, the features of Tararo, my old friend of the Coral Island!

Tararo at the same moment recognized me, and advancing quickly, took me round the neck and rubbed noses; which had the effect of transferring a good deal of the moist paint from his nose to mine. Then, recollecting that this was not the white man's mode of salutation, he grasped me by the hand and shook it violently.

"Hallo, Ralph!" cried Bill, in surprise, "that chap seems to have taken a sudden fancy to you, or he must be an old acquaintance."

"Right, Bill," I replied: "he is indeed an old acquaintance;" and I explained in a few words that he was the chief whose party Jack and Peterkin and I had helped to save.

Tararo having thrown away his surf-board, entered into an animated conversation with Bill, pointing frequently during the course of it to me; whereby I concluded he must be telling him about the memorable battle and the part we had taken in it. When he paused I begged of Bill to ask him about the woman Avatea, for I had some hope that she might have come with Tararo on this visit. "And ask him," said I, "who she is, for I am persuaded she is of a different race from the Feejeeans." On the mention of her name the chief frowned darkly, and seemed to speak with much anger.

"You're right, Ralph," said Bill, when the chief had ceased to talk: "she's not a Feejee girl, but a Samoan. How she ever came to this place the chief does not very clearly explain, but he says she was taken in war, and that he got her three years ago an' kept her as his daughter ever since. Lucky for her, poor girl, else she'd have been roasted and eaten like the rest."

"But why does Tararo frown and look so angry?" said I.

"Because the girl's somewhat obstinate, like most o' the sex, an' won't marry the man he wants her to. It seems that a chief of some other island came on a visit to Tararo and took a fancy to her, but she wouldn't have him on no account, bein' already in love, and engaged to a young chief whom Tararo hates, and she kicked up a desperate shindy; so, as he was going on a war-expedition in his canoe, he left her to think about it, sayin' he'd be back in six months or so, when he hoped she wouldn't be so obstropolous. This happened just a week ago; and Tararo says that if she's not ready to go when the chief returns, as his bride, she'll be sent to him as a *long pig*."

"As a long pig!" I exclaimed in surprise; "why, what does he mean by that?"

"He means somethin' very unpleasant," answered Bill, with a frown. "You see these blackguards eat men an' women just as readily as they eat pigs; and as baked pigs and baked men are very like each other in appearance, they call men *long pigs*. If Avatea goes to this fellow as a long pig, it's all up with her, poor thing."

"Is she on the island now?" I asked eagerly.

"No; she is at Tararo's island."

"And where does it lie?"

"About fifty or sixty miles to the south'ard o' this," returned Bill; "but I—"

At this moment we were startled by the cry of "Mao! mao!—a shark! a shark!" which was immediately followed by a shriek that rang clear and fearfully loud above the tumult of cries that arose from the savages in the water and on the land. We turned hastily towards the direction whence the cry came, and had just time to observe the glaring eyeballs of one of the swimmers as he tossed his arms in the air. Next instant he was pulled under the waves. A canoe was instantly launched, and the hand of the drowning man was caught, but only half his body was dragged from the maw of the monster, which followed the canoe until the water became so shallow that it could scarcely swim. The crest of the next billow was tinged with red as it rolled towards the shore.

In most countries of the world this would have made a deep impression on the spectators, but the only effect it had upon these islanders was to make them hurry with all speed out of the sea, lest a similar fate should befall some of the others; but so utterly reckless were they of human life, that it did not for a moment suspend the progress of their amusements. It is true the surf-swimming ended for that time somewhat abruptly, but they immediately proceeded with other games. Bill told me the sharks do not often attack the surf-swimmers, being frightened away by the immense number of men and boys in the water, and by the shouting and splashing that they make. "But," said he, "such a thing as you have seen just now don't frighten them much. They'll be at it again to-morrow or next day, just as if there wasn't a single shark between Feejee and Nova Zembla."

After this the natives had a series of wrestling and boxing matches; and being men of immense size and muscle, they did a good deal of injury to each other, especially in boxing, in which not only the lower orders but several of the chiefs and priests engaged. Each bout was very quickly terminated, for they did not pretend to a

scientific knowledge of the art, and wasted no time in sparring, but hit straight out at each other's heads, and their blows were delivered with great force. Frequently one of the combatants was knocked down with a single blow ; and one gigantic fellow hit his adversary so severely that he drove the skin entirely off his forehead. This feat was hailed with immense applause by the spectators.

During these exhibitions, which were very painful to me, though I confess I could not refrain from beholding them, I was struck with the beauty of many of the figures and designs that were tattooed on the persons of the chiefs and principal men. One figure, that seemed to me very elegant, was that of a palm tree tattooed on the back of a man's leg, the roots rising, as it were, from under his heel, the stem ascending the tendon of the ankle, and the graceful head branching out upon the calf. I afterwards learned that this process of tattooing is very painful, and takes long to do, commencing at the age of ten, and being continued at intervals up to the age of thirty. It is done by means of an instrument made of bone, with a number of sharp teeth with which the skin is punctured. Into these punctures a preparation made from the kernel of the candle-nut, mixed with cocoa-nut oil, is rubbed, and the mark thus made is indelible. The operation is preformed by a class of men whose profession it is, and they tattoo as much at a time as the person on whom they are operating can bear ; which is not much, the pain and inflammation caused by tattooing being very great, sometimes causing death. Some of the chiefs were tattooed with an ornamental stripe down the legs, which gave them the appearance of being clad in tights ; others had marks round the ankles and insteps which looked like tight-fitting and elegant boots. Their faces were also tattooed, and their breasts were very poofusely marked with every imaginable species of device,—muskets, dogs, birds, pigs, clubs, and canoes, intermingled with lozenges, squares, circles, and other arbitrary figures.

The women were not tattooed so much as the men, having only a few marks on their feet and arms. But I must say, however objectionable this strange practice may be, it nevertheless had this good effect, that it took away very much from their appearance of nakedness.

Next day, while we were returning from the woods to our schooner, we observed Romata rushing about in the neighbourhood of his house, apparently mad with passion.

"Ah !" said Bill to me, "there he's at his old tricks again. That's his way when he gets drink. The natives make a sort of drink o' their own, and it makes him bad enough ; but when he gets brandy he's like a wild tiger. The captain, I suppose, has given him a bottle, as usual, to keep him in good humour. After drinkin' he usually goes to sleep, and the people know it well, and keep out of his way, for fear they should waken him. Even the babies are taken out of ear-shot ; for when he's waked up he rushes out just as you see him now, and spears or clubs the first person he meets."

It seemed at the present time, however, that no deadly weapon had been in his way, for the infuriated chief was raging about without one. Suddenly he caught sight of an unfortunate man who was trying to conceal himself behind a tree. Rushing towards him, Romata struck him a terrible blow, which knocked out the poor

man's eye and also dislocated the chief's finger. The wretched creature offered no resistance; he did not even attempt to parry the blow. Indeed, from what Bill said, I found that he might consider himself lucky in having escaped with his life, which would certainly have been forfeited had the chief been possessed of a club at the time.

"Have these wretched creatures no law among themselves," said I, "which can restrain such wickedness?"

"None," replied Bill. "The chief's word is law. He might kill and eat a dozen of his own subjects any day for nothing more than his own pleasure, and nobody would take the least notice of it."

This ferocious deed took place within sight of our party as we wended our way to the beach, but I could not observe any other expression on the faces of the men than that of total indifference or contempt. It seemed to me a very awful thing that it should be possible for men to come to such hardness of heart and callousness to the sight of bloodshed and violence; but, indeed, I began to find that such constant exposure to scenes of blood was having a slight effect upon myself, and I shuddered when I came to think that I too was becoming callous.

I thought upon this subject much that night while I walked up and down the deck during my hours of watch, and I came to the conclusion that if I, who hated, abhorred, and detested such bloody deeds as I had witnessed within the last few weeks, could so soon come to be less sensitive about them, how little wonder that these poor ignorant savages, who were born and bred in familiarity therewith, should think nothing of them at all, and should hold human life in so very slight esteem.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Mischief brewing—My blood is made to run cold—Evil consultations and wicked resolves—Bloody Bill attempts to do good, and fails—The attack—Wholesale murder—The flight—The escape.

NEXT morning I awoke with a feverish brow and a feeling of deep depression at my heart, and the more I thought on my unhappy fate, the more wretched and miserable did I feel.

I was surrounded on all sides by human beings of the most dreadful character, to whom the shedding of blood was mere pastime. On shore were the natives, whose practices were so horrible that I could not think of them without shuddering. On board were none but pirates of the blackest dye, who, although not cannibals, were foul murderers, and more blameworthy even than the savages, inasmuch as they knew better. Even Bill, with whom I had, under the strange circumstances of my lot, formed a kind of intimacy, was so fierce in his nature as to have acquired the title of "Bloody" from his vile companions. I felt very much cast down the more I considered the subject and the impossibility of delivery, as it seemed to me, at least for a long time to come. At last, in my feeling of utter helplessness, I prayed fervently to the Almighty that he would deliver me out of my miserable condition; and when I had done so I felt some degree of comfort.

When the captain came on deck, before the hour at which the men

usually started for the woods, I begged of him to permit me to remain aboard that day, as I did not feel well ; but he looked at me angrily, and ordered me, in a surly tone, to get ready to go on shore as usual. The fact was that the captain had been out of humour for some time past. Romata and he had had some differences, and high words had passed between them, during which the chief had threatened to send a fleet of his war-canoes, with a thousand men, to break up and burn the schooner ; whereupon the captain smiled sarcastically, and going up to the chief gazed sternly in his face, while he said, "I have only to raise my little finger just now, and my big gun will blow your whole village to atoms in five minutes !" Although the chief was a bold man, he quailed before the pirate's glance and threat, and made no reply ; but a bad feeling had been raised, and old sores had been opened.

I had, therefore, to go with the wood-cutters that day. Before starting, however, the captain called me into the cabin, and said,—

"Here, Ralph ; I've got a mission for you lad. That blackguard Romata is in the dumps, and nothing will mollify him but a gift ; so do you go up to his house and give him these whale's teeth, with my compliments. Take with you one of the men who can speak the language."

I looked at the gift in some surprise, for it consisted of six white whale's teeth, and two of the same dyed bright red, which seemed to me very paltry things. However, I did not dare to hesitate or ask any questions ; so gathering them up, I left the cabin, and was soon on my way to the chief's house, accompanied by Bill. On expressing my surprise at the gift, he said,—

"They're paltry enough to you or me, Ralph, but they're considered of great value by them chaps. They're a sort o' cash among them. The red ones are the most prized, one of them bein' equal to twenty o' the white ones. I suppose the only reason for their bein' valuable is that there ain't many of them, and they're hard to be got."

On arriving at the house we found Romata sitting on a mat, in the midst of a number of large bales of native cloth and other articles, which had been brought to him as presents from time to time by inferior chiefs. He received us rather haughtily, but on Bill explaining the nature of our errand he became very condescending, and his eyes glistened with satisfaction when he received the whale's teeth, although he laid them aside with an assumption of kingly indifference.

"Go," said he, with a wave of the hand—"go tell your captain that he may cut wood to-day, but not to-morrow. He must come ashore ; I want to have a palaver with him."

As we left the house to return to the woods, Bill shook his head.

"There's mischief brewin' in that black rascal's head. I know him of old. But what comes here ?"

As he spoke, we heard the sound of laughter and shouting in the wood, and presently there issued from it a band of savages, in the midst of whom were a number of men bearing burdens on their shoulders. At first I thought that these burdens were poles with something rolled round them, the end of each pole resting on a man's shoulder ; but on a nearer approach I saw that they were human beings, tied hand and foot, and so lashed to the poles that they could not move. I counted twenty of them as they passed.

"More murder!" said Bill, in a voice that sounded between a hoarse laugh and a groan.

"Surely they are not going to murder them?" said I, looking anxiously into Bill's face.

"I don't know, Ralph," replied Bill, "what they're goin' to do with them; but I fear they mean no good when they tie fellows up in that way."

As we continued our way towards the wood-cutters, I observed that Bill looked anxiously over his shoulder in the direction where the procession had disappeared. At last he stopped, and turning abruptly on his heel, said,—

"I tell ye what it is, Ralph; I must be at the bottom o' that affair. Let us follow these black scoundrels and see what they're goin' to do."

I must say I had no wish to pry further into their bloody practices; but Bill seemed bent on it, so I turned and went. We passed rapidly through the bush, being guided in the right direction by the shouts of the savages. Suddenly there was a dead silence, which continued for some time, while Bill and I involuntarily quickened our pace until we were running at the top of our speed across the narrow neck of land previously mentioned. As we reached the verge of the wood, we discovered the savages surrounding the large war-canoe, which they were apparently on the point of launching. Suddenly the multitude put their united strength to the canoe; but scarcely had the huge machine begun to move, when a yell, the most appalling that ever fell upon my ear, rose high above the shouting of the savages. It had not died away when another and another smote upon my throbbing ear; and then I saw that these inhuman monsters were actually launching their canoe over the living bodies of their victims. But there was no pity in the breasts of these men. Forward they went in ruthless indifference, shouting as they went, while high above their voices rang the dying shrieks of those wretched creatures, as, one after another, the ponderous canoe passed over them, burst the eye-balls from their sockets, and sent the life-blood gushing from their mouths. O reader, this is no fiction. I would not, for the sake of thrilling you with horror, invent so terrible a scene. It was witnessed. It is true—true as that accursed sin which has rendered the human heart capable of such diabolical enormities!

When it was over I turned round and fell upon the grass with a deep groan; but Bill seized me by the arm, and lifting me up as if I had been a child, cried,—

"Come along, lad; let's away!"—and so, staggering and stumbling over the tangled underwood, we fled from the fatal spot.

During the remainder of that day I felt as if I were in a horrible dream. I scarce knew what was said to me, and was more than once blamed by the men for idling my time. At last the hour to return aboard came. We marched down to the beach, and I felt relief for the first time when my feet rested on the schooner's deck.

In the course of the evening I overheard part of a conversation between the captain and the first mate, which startled me not a little. They were down in the cabin, and conversed in an undertone; but the sky-light being off, I overheard every word that was said.

"I don't half like it," said the mate. "It seems to me that we'll only have hard fishin' and no pay."

"No pay! repeated the captain, in a voice of suppressed anger. "Do you call a good cargo all for nothing no pay?"

"Very true," returned the mate; "but we've got the cargo aboard. Why not cut your cable and take French leave o' them? What's the use o' tryin' to lick the blackguards when it'll do us no manner o' good?"

"Mate," said the captain, in a low voice, "you talk like a fresh-water sailor. I can only attribute this shyness to some strange delusion; for surely" (his voice assumed a slightly sneering tone as he said this), "surely I am not to suppose that *you* have become soft-hearted! Besides, you are wrong in regard to the cargo being aboard; there's a good quarter of it lying in the woods, and that blackguard chief knows it and won't let me take it off. He defied us to do our worst yesterday."

"Defied us? did he?" cried the mate, with a bitter laugh. "Poor, contemptible thing!"

"And yet he seems not so contemptible but that you are afraid to attack him."

"Who said I was afraid?" growled the mate sulkily. "I'm as ready as any man in the ship. But, captain, what is it that you intend to do?"

"I intend to muffle the sweeps and row the schooner up to the head of the creek there, from which point we can command the pile of sandal-wood with our gun. Then I shall land with all the men except two, who shall take care of the schooner and be ready with the boat to take us off. We can creep through the woods to the head of the village, where these cannibals are always dancing round their suppers of human flesh, and if the carbines of the men are loaded with a heavy charge of buck-shot, we can drop forty or fifty at the first volley. After that the thing will be easy enough. The savages will take to the mountains in a body, and we shall take what we require, up anchor, and away."

To this plan the mate at length agreed. As he left the cabin I heard the captain say,—

"Give the men an extra glass of grog, and don't forget the buck-shot."

The reader may conceive the horror with which I heard this murderous conversation. I immediately repeated it to Bill, who seemed much perplexed about it. At length he said,—

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Ralph. I'll swim ashore after dark and fix a musket to a tree not far from the place where we'll have to land, and I'll tie a long string to the trigger, so that when our fellows cross it they'll let it off, and so alarm the village in time to prevent an attack, but not in time to prevent us gettin' back to the boat. So, Master Captain," added Bill, with a smile that for the first time seemed to me to be mingled with good-natured cheerfulness, "you'll be balked at least for once in your life by Bloody Bill."

After it grew dark, Bill put this resolve into practice. He slipped over the side with a musket in his left hand, while with his right he swam ashore and entered the woods. He soon returned, having accomplished his purpose, and got on board without being seen, I being the only one on deck.

When the hour of midnight approached the men were mustered on deck, the cable was cut and the muffled sweeps got out. These

sweeps were immensely large oars, each requiring a couple of men to work it. In a few minutes we entered the mouth of the creek, which was indeed the mouth of a small river, and took about half-an-hour to ascend it, although the spot where we intended to land was not more than six hundred yards from the mouth, because there was a slight current against us, and the mangroves which narrowed the creek impeded the rowers in some places. Having reached the spot, which was so darkened by overhanging trees that we could see with difficulty, a small kedge anchor attached to a thin line was let softly down over the stern.

"Now, lads," whispered the captain, as he walked along the line of men, who were all armed to the teeth, "don't be in a hurry, aim low, and don't waste your first shots."

He then pointed to the boat, into which the men crowded in silence. There was no room to row; but oars were not needed, as a slight push against the side of the schooner sent the boat gliding to the shore.

"There's no need of leaving two in the boat," whispered the mate, as the men stepped out; "we shall want all our hands. Let Ralph stay."

The captain assented, and ordered me to stand in readiness with the boat-hook, to shove ashore at a moment's notice if they should return, or to shove off if any of the savages should happen to approach. He then threw his carbine into the hollow of his arm and glided through the bushes, followed by his men. With a throbbing heart I awaited the result of our plan. I knew the exact locality where the musket was placed, for Bill had described it to me, and I kept my straining eyes fixed upon the spot. But no sound came, and I began to fear that either they had gone in another direction or that Bill had not fixed the string properly. Suddenly I heard a faint click, and observed one or two bright sparks among the bushes. My heart immediately sank within me, for I knew at once that the trigger had indeed been pulled, but that the priming had not caught. The plan, therefore, had utterly failed. A feeling of dread now began to creep over me as I stood in the boat, in that dark, silent spot, awaiting the issue of this murderous expedition. I shuddered as I glanced at the water that glided past like a dark reptile. I looked back at the schooner, but her hull was just barely visible, while her tapering masts were lost among the trees which overshadowed her. Her lower sails were set, but so thick was the gloom that they were quite invisible.

Suddenly I heard a shot. In a moment a thousand voices raised a yell in the village; again the cry rose on the night air, and was followed by broken shouts as of scattered parties of men bounding into the woods. Then I heard another shout loud and close at hand. It was the voice of the captain cursing the man who had fixed the premature shot. Then came the order "Forward!" followed by a wild hurrah of our men as they charged the savages. Shots now ran in quick succession, and at last a loud volley startled the echoes of the wood. It was followed by a multitude of wild shrieks, which were immediately drowned in another hurrah from the men; the distance of the sound proving that they were driving their enemies before them towards the sea.

While I was listening intently to these sounds, which were now

mingled in confusion, I was startled by the rustling of the leaves not far from me. At first I thought it was a party of savages who had observed the schooner, but I was speedily undeceived by observing a body of natives—apparently several hundreds, as far as I could guess in the uncertain light—bounding through the woods towards the scene of battle. I saw at once that this was a party who had outflanked our men, and would speedily attack them in the rear. And so it turned out ; for in a short time the shouts increased tenfold, and among them I thought I heard a death-cry uttered by voices familiar to my ear.

At length the tumult of battle ceased, and from the cries of exultation that now arose from the savages, I felt assured that our men had been conquered. I was immediately thrown into dreadful consternation. What was I now to do ? To be taken by the savages was too horrible to be thought of ; to flee to the mountains was hopeless, as I should soon be discovered ; and to take the schooner out of the creek without assistance was impossible. I resolved, however, to make the attempt, as being my only hope, and was on the point of pushing off, when my hand was stayed, and my blood chilled by an appalling shriek, in which I recognized the voice of one of the crew. It was succeeded by a shout from the savages. Then came another and another shriek of agony, making my ears to tingle, as I felt convinced they were murdering the pirate crew in cold blood. With a bursting heart and my brain whirling as if on fire, I seized the boat-hook to push from shore, when a man sprang from the bushes.

"Stop ! Ralph, stop !—there now, push off," he cried and bounded into the boat so violently as nearly to upset her. It was Bill's voice ! In another moment we were on board—the boat made fast, the line of the anchor cut, and the sweeps ran out. At the first stroke of Bill's giant arm the schooner was nearly pulled ashore, for in his haste he forgot that I could scarcely move the unwieldy oar. Springing to the stern, he lashed the rudder in such a position as that, while it aided me, it acted against him, and so rendered the force of our strokes nearly equal. The schooner now began to glide quickly down the creek ; but before we reached its mouth, a yell from a thousand voices on the bank told that we were discovered. Instantly a number of the savages plunged into the water and swam towards us ; but we were making so much way that they could not overtake us. One, however, an immensely powerful man, succeeded in laying hold of the cut rope that hung from the stern, and clambered quickly upon deck. Bill caught sight of him the instant his head appeared above the taffrail. But he did not cease to row, and did not appear even to notice the savage until he was within a yard of him ; then dropping the sweep he struck him a blow on the forehead with his clenched fist that felled him to the deck. Lifting him up he hurled him overboard and resumed the oar. But now a greater danger awaited us, for the savages had outrun us on the bank, and were about to plunge into the water ahead of the schooner. If they succeeded in doing so our fate was sealed. For one moment Bill stood irresolute. Then drawing a pistol from his belt, he sprang to the brass gun, held the pan of his pistol over the touch-hole and fired. The shot was succeeded by the hiss of the cannon's priming, then the blaze and the crashing thunder of the monstrous gun burst upon the savages with such deafening roar that it seemed as if their very mountains had been rent asunder.

This was enough. The moment of surprise and hesitation caused by the unwonted sound gave us time to pass the point ; a gentle breeze which the dense foliage had hitherto prevented us from feeling, bulged out our sails ; the schooner bent before it, and the shouts of the disappointed savages grew fainter and fainter in the distance as we were slowly wafted out to sea.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Reflections—The wounded man—The squall—True consolation—Death.

THERE is a power of endurance in human beings, both in their bodies and in their minds, which, I have often thought, seems to be wonderfully adapted and exactly proportioned to the circumstances in which individuals may happen to be placed—a power which, in most cases, is sufficient to carry a man through and over every obstacle that may happen to be thrown in his path through life, no matter how high or how steep the mountain may be, but which often forsakes him the moment the summit is gained, the point of difficulty passed, and leaves him prostrated, with energies gone, nerves unstrung, and a feeling of incapacity pervading the entire frame that renders the most trifling effort almost impossible.

During the greater part of that day I had been subjected to severe mental and much physical excitement, which had almost crushed me down by the time I was relieved from duty in the course of the evening. But when the expedition whose failure has just been narrated was planned, my anxieties and energies had been so powerfully aroused that I went through the protracted scenes of that terrible night without a feeling of the slightest fatigue. My mind and body were alike active and full of energy. No sooner was the last thrilling fear of danger past, however, than my faculties were utterly relaxed and when I felt the cool breezes of the Pacific playing around my fevered brow, and heard the free waves rippling at the schooner's prow, as we left the hated island behind us, my senses forsook me, and I fell in a swoon upon the deck.

From this state I was quickly aroused by Bill, who shook me by the arm, saying—

“Hollo, Ralph boy ! rouse up, lad ; we're safe now. Poor thing ! I believe he's fainted.” And raising me in his arms he laid me on the folds of the gaff-top-sail, which lay upon the deck near the tiller. “Here take a drop o' this ; it'll do you good, my boy,” he added, in a voice of tenderness which I had never heard him use before, while he held a brandy-flask to my lips.

I raised my eyes gratefully as I swallowed a mouthful ; next moment my head sank heavily upon my arm, and I fell fast asleep. I slept long, for when I awoke the sun was a good way above the horizon. I did not move on first opening my eyes, as I felt a delightful sensation of rest pervading me, and my eyes were riveted on and charmed with the gorgeous splendour of the mighty ocean, that burst upon my sight. It was a dead calm ; the sea seemed a sheet of undulating crystal tipped and streaked with the saffron hues of sunrise which had not yet merged into the glowing heat of noon ; and there was a deep calm in the blue dome above that was not broken even by the usual flutter of the sea-fowl. How long I would have lain in

contemplation of this peaceful scene I know not, but my mind was recalled suddenly and painfully to the past and the present by the sight of Bill, who was seated on the deck at my feet with his head reclining, as if in sleep, on his right arm, which rested on the tiller. As he seemed to rest peacefully, I did not mean to disturb him, but the slight noise I made in raising myself on my elbow caused him to start and look round.

"Well, Ralph, awake at last, my boy; you have slept long and soundly," he said, turning towards me.

On beholding his countenance I sprang up in anxiety. He was deadly pale, and his hair, which hung in dishevelled locks over his face, was clotted with blood. Blood also stained his hollow cheeks and covered the front of his shirt, which, with the greater part of his dress, was torn and soiled with mud.

"O Bill!" said I, with deep anxiety, "what is the matter with you? You are ill. You must have been wounded."

"Even so, lad," said Bill, in a deep soft voice, while he extended his huge frame on the couch from which I had just risen. "I've got an ugly wound, I fear; and I've been waiting for you to waken, to ask you to get me a drop o' brandy and a mouthful o' bread from the cabin lockers. You seemed to sleep so sweetly, Ralph, that I didn't like to disturb you. But I don't feel up to much just now."

I did not wait till he had done talking, but ran below immediately, and returned in a few seconds with a bottle of brandy and some broken biscuit. He seemed much refreshed after eating a few morsels and drinking a long draught of water mingled with a little of the spirits. Immediately afterwards he fell asleep, and I watched him anxiously until he awoke, being desirous of knowing the nature and extent of his wound.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, on awaking suddenly, after a slumber of an hour, "I'm the better of that nap, Ralph; I feel twice the man I was;" and he attempted to rise, but sank back again immediately with a deep groan.

"Nay, Bill, you must not move, but lie still while I look at your wound. I'll make a comfortable bed for you here on deck, and get you some breakfast. After that you shall tell me how you got it. Cheer up, Bill," I added, seeing that he turned his head away; "you'll be all right in a little, and I'll be a capital nurse to you though I'm no doctor."

I then left him, and lighted a fire in the caboose. While it was kindling, I went to the steward's pantry and procured the materials for a good breakfast, with which, in little more than half-an-hour, I returned to my companion. He seemed much better, and smiled kindly on me as I set before him a cup of coffee and a tray with several eggs and some bread on it.

"Now then, Bill," said I cheerfully, sitting down beside him on the deck, "let's fall to. I'm very hungry myself, I can tell you; but—I forgot—your wound," I added, rising; "let me look at it."

I found that the wound was caused by a pistol-shot in the chest. It did not bleed much, and as it was on the right side, I was in hopes that it might not be very serious. But Bill shook his head. "However," said he, "sit down, Ralph, and I'll tell you all about it."

"You see, after we left the boat an' began to push through the bushes, we went straight for the line of my musket, as I had ex-

pected ; but by some unlucky chance it didn't explode, for I saw the line torn away by the men's legs, and heard the click o' the lock ; so I fancy the priming had got damp and didn't catch. I was in a great quandary now what to do, for I couldn't concoct in my mind, in the hurry, any good reason for firin' off my piece. But they say necessity's the mother of invention ; so just as I was givin' it up and clinchin' my teeth to bide the worst o't, and take what should come, a sudden thought came into my head. I stepped out before the rest, seemin' to be awful anxious to be at the savages, tripped my foot on a fallen tree, plunged head foremost into a bush, an', ov coorse, my carbine exploded ! Then came such a screechin' from the camp as I never heard in all my life. I rose at once, and was rushing on with the rest, when the captain called a halt.

" ' You did that a-purpose, you villain ! ' he said, with a tremendous oath, and drawin' a pistol from his belt, let fly right into my breast. I fell at once, and remembered no more till I was startled and brought round by the most awful yell I ever heard in my life—except, maybe, the shrieks o' them poor critters that were crushed to death under yon big canoe. Jumpin' up, I looked round, and through the trees saw a fire gleamin' not far off, the light of which showed me the captain and men tied hand and foot, each to a post, and the savages dancin' round them like demons. I had scarce looked for a second, when I saw one o' them go up to the captain flourishing a knife, and before I could wink he plunged it into his breast, while another yell, like the one that roused me, rang upon my ear. I didn't wait for more, but bounding up, went crashing through the bushes into the woods. The black fellows caught sight of me, however, but not in time to prevent me jumpin' into the boat, as you know."

Bill seemed to be much exhausted after this recital, and shuddered frequently during the narrative, so I refrained from continuing the subject at that time, and endeavoured to draw his mind to other things.

" But now, Bill," said I, " it behoves us to think about the future, and what course of action we shall pursue. Here we are, on the wide Pacific, in a well-appointed schooner, which is our own—at least no one has a better claim to it than we have—and the world lies before us. Moreover, here comes a breeze, so we must make up our minds which way to steer."

" Ralph, boy," said my companion, " it matters not to me which way we go. I fear that my time is short now. Go where you will ; I'm content."

" Well then, Bill, I think we had better steer to the Coral Island, and see what has become of my dear old comrades, Jack and Peterkin. I believe the island has no name, but the captain once pointed it out to me on the chart, and I marked it afterwards ; so, as we know pretty well our position just now, I think I can steer to it. Then, as to working the vessel, it is true I cannot hoist the sails single-handed, but luckily we have enough of sail set already ; and if it should come on to blow a squall, I could at least drop the peaks of the main and fore sails, and clew them up partially without help, and throw her head close into the wind, so as to keep her all shaking till the violence of the squall is past. And if we have continued light breezes, I'll rig up a complication of blocks, and fix them to the top-

sail halyards, so that I shall be able to hoist the sails without help. 'Tis true I'll require half-a-day to hoist them, but we don't need to mind that. Then I'll make a sort of erection on deck to screen you from the sun, Bill; and if you can only manage to sit beside the tiller and steer for two hours every day, so as to let me get a nap, I'll engage to let you off duty all the rest of the twenty-four hours. And if you don't feel able for steering, I'll lash the helm and heave to, while I get you your breakfasts and dinners; and so we'll manage famously, and soon reach the Coral Island."

Bill smiled faintly as I ran on in this strain.

"And what will you do," said he, "if it comes on to blow a storm?"

This question silenced me, while I considered what I should do in such a case. At length I laid my hand on his arm, and said, "Bill, when a man has done all that he *can* do, he ought to leave the rest to God."

"O Ralph," said my companion, in a faint voice, looking anxiously into my face, "I wish that I had the feelin's about God that you seem to have, at this hour. I'm dyin', Ralph; yet I, who have braved death a hundred times, am afraid to die. I'm afraid to enter the next world. Something within tells me there will be a reckoning when I go there. But it's all over with me, Ralph. I feel that there's no chance o' my bein' saved."

"Don't say that, Bill," said I, in deep compassion; "don't say that. I'm quite sure there's hope even for you, but I can't remember the words of the Bible that make me think so. Is there not a Bible on board, Bill?"

"No; the last that was in the ship belonged to a poor boy that was taken aboard against his will. He died, poor lad—I think through ill-treatment and fear. After he was gone the captain found his Bible and flung it overboard."

I now reflected, with great sadness and self-reproach, on the way in which I had neglected my Bible; and it flashed across me that I was actually in the sight of God a greater sinner than this blood-stained pirate; for, thought I, he tells me that he never read the Bible, and was never brought up to care for it; whereas I was carefully taught to read it by my own mother, and had read it daily as long as I possessed one, yet to so little purpose that I could not now call to mind a single text that would meet this poor man's case, and afford him the consolation he so much required. I was much distressed, and taxed my memory for a long time. At last a text did flash into my mind, and I wondered much that I had not thought of it before.

"Bill," said I, in a low voice, "'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'"

"Ay, Ralph, I've heard the missionaries say that before now, but what good can it do me? It's not for me that; it's not for the likes o' me."

I knew not now what to say, for although I felt sure that that word was for him as well as for me, I could not remember any other word whereby I could prove it.

After a short pause, Bill raised his eyes to mine and said, "Ralph, I've led a terrible life. I've been a sailor since I was a boy, and I've gone from bad to worse ever since I left my father's roof. I've been

a pirate three years now. It is true I did not choose the trade, but I was inveigled aboard this schooner and kept here by force till I became reckless and at last joined them. Since that time my hand has been steeped in human blood again and again. Your young heart would grow cold if I— But why should I go on? 'Tis of no use, Ralph; my doom is fixed."

"Bill," said I, "'Though your sins be red like crimson, they shall be white as snow.' 'Only believe.'"

"Only believe!" cried Bill, starting up on his elbow. "I've heard men talk o' believing as if it was easy. Ha! 'tis easy enough for a man to point to a rope and say, 'I believe that would bear my weight,' but 'tis another thing for a man to catch hold o' that rope and swing himself by it over the edge of a precipice!"

The energy with which he said this, and the action with which it was accompanied, were too much for Bill. He sank back with a deep groan. As if the very elements sympathized with this man's sufferings, a low moan came sweeping over the sea.

"Hist, Ralph!" said Bill, opening his eyes; "there's a squall coming, lad. Look alive, boy! Clew up the fore-sail. Drop the main-sail peak. Them squalls come quick sometimes."

I had already started to my feet, and saw that a heavy squall was indeed bearing down on us. It had hitherto escaped my notice, owing to my being so much engrossed by our conversation. I instantly did as Bill desired, for the schooner was lying motionless on the glassy sea. I observed with some satisfaction that the squall was bearing down on the larboard bow, so that it would strike the vessel in the position in which she would be best able to stand the shock. Having done my best to shorten sail, I returned aft, and took my stand at the helm.

"Now, boy," said Bill, in a faint voice, "keep her close to the wind."

A few seconds afterwards he said, "Ralph, let me hear those two texts again."

I repeated them.

"Are ye sure, lad, ye saw them in the Bible?"

"Quite sure," I replied.

Almost before the words had left my lips the wind burst upon us, and the spray dashed over our decks. For a time the schooner stood it bravely, and sprang forward against the rising sea like a war-horse. Meanwhile clouds darkened the sky, and the sea began to rise in huge billows. There was still too much sail on the schooner, and as the gale increased, I feared that the masts would be torn out of her or carried away, while the wind whistled and shrieked through the strained rigging. Suddenly the wind shifted a point, a heavy sea struck us on the bow, and the schooner was almost laid on her beam-ends, so that I could scarcely keep my legs. At the same moment Bill lost his hold of the belaying-pin which had served to steady him, and he slid with stunning violence against the skylight. As he lay on the deck close beside me, I could see that the shock had rendered him insensible, but I did not dare to quit the tiller for an instant, as it required all my faculties, bodily and mental, to manage the schooner. For an hour the blast drove us along, while, owing to the sharpness of the vessel's bow and the press of canvas, she dashed through the waves instead of breasting over them, thereby drenching the decks with water fore and aft. At the end of that

time the squall passed away, and left us rocking on the bosom of the agitated sea.

My first care, the instant I could quit the helm, was to raise Bill from the deck and place him on the couch. I then ran below for the brandy bottle and rubbed his face and hands with it, and endeavoured to pour a little down his throat. But my efforts, although I continued them long and assiduously, were of no avail; as I let go the hand which I had been chafing it fell heavily on the deck. I laid my hand over his heart, and sat for some time quite motionless; but there was no flutter there—the pirate was dead!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

*Alone on the deep—Necessity the mother of invention—A valuable book discovered—
Natural phenomenon—A bright day in my history.*

It was with feelings of awe, not unmingled with fear, that I now seated myself on the cabin skylight and gazed upon the rigid features of my late comrade, while my mind wandered over his past history and contemplated with anxiety my present position. Alone, in the midst of the wide Pacific, having a most imperfect knowledge of navigation, and in a schooner requiring at least eight men as her proper crew! But I will not tax the reader's patience with a minute detail of my feelings and doings during the first few days that followed the death of my companion. I will merely mention that I tied a cannon-ball to his feet, and with feelings of the deepest sorrow consigned him to the deep.

For fully a week after that a steady breeze blew from the east, and as my course lay west and by north, I made rapid progress towards my destination. I could not take an observation, which I very much regretted, as the captain's quadrant was in the cabin; but from the day of setting sail from the island of the savages I had kept a dead reckoning, and as I knew pretty well now how much leeway the schooner made, I hoped to hit the Coral Island without much difficulty. In this I was the more confident that I knew its position on the chart (which I understood was a very good one), and so had its correct bearings by compass.

As the weather seemed now quite settled and fine, and as I had got into the trade-winds, I set about preparations for hoisting the top-sails. This was a most arduous task, and my first attempts were complete failures, owing, in a great degree, to my reprehensible ignorance of mechanical forces. The first error I made was in applying my apparatus of blocks and pulleys to a rope which was too weak, so that the very first heave I made broke it in two, and sent me staggering against the after-hatch, over which I tripped, and striking against the main-boom, tumbled down the companion-ladder into the cabin. I was much bruised and somewhat stunned by this untoward accident. However, I considered it fortunate that I was not killed. In my next attempt I made sure of not coming by a similar accident, so I unreeved the tackling and fitted up larger blocks and ropes. But although the principle on which I acted was quite correct, the machinery was now so massive and heavy that the mere friction and stiffness of the thick cordage prevented me from moving it at all. Afterwards, however, I came to proportion things

more correctly ; but I could not avoid reflecting at the time how much better it would have been had I learned all this from observation and study, instead of waiting till I was forced to acquire it through the painful and tedious lessons of experience.

After the tackling was prepared and in good working order, it took me the greater part of a day to hoist the main-top sail. As I could not steer and work at this at the same time, I lashed the helm in such a position that, with a little watching now and then, it kept the schooner in her proper course. By this means I was enabled also to go about the deck and down below for things that I wanted, as occasion required ; also to cook and eat my victuals. But I did not dare to trust to this plan during the three hours of rest that I allowed myself at night, as the wind might have shifted, in which case I should have been blown far out of my course ere I awoke. I was, therefore, in the habit of heaving to during those three hours—that is, fixing the rudder and the sails in such a position as that by acting against each other they would keep the ship stationary. After my night's rest, therefore, I had only to make allowance for the leeway she had made, and so resume my course.

Of course I was to some extent anxious lest another squall should come, but I made the best provision I could in the circumstances, and concluded that by letting go the weather-braces of the top-sails and the top-sail halyards at the same time, I should thereby render these sails almost powerless. Besides this, I proposed to myself to keep a sharp look-out on the barometer in the cabin, and if I observed at any time a sudden fall in it I resolved that I would instantly set about my multiform appliances for reducing sail, so as to avoid being taken at unawares. Thus I sailed prosperously for two weeks, with a fair wind, so that I calculated I must be drawing near to the Coral Island ; at the thought of which my heart bounded with joyful expectation.

The only book I found on board, after a careful search, was a volume of Captain Cook's voyages. This, I suppose, the pirate captain had brought with him in order to guide him, and to furnish him with information regarding the islands of these seas. I found this a most delightful book indeed, and I not only obtained much interesting knowledge about the sea in which I was sailing, but I had many of my own opinions, derived from experience, corroborated, and not a few of them corrected. Besides the reading of this charming book, and the daily routine of occupations, nothing of particular note happened to me during this voyage, except once, when on rising one night, after my three hours' nap, while it was yet dark, I was amazed and a little alarmed to find myself floating in what appeared to be a sea of blue fire ! I had often noticed the beautiful appearance of phosphorescent light, but this far exceeded anything of the sort I ever saw before. The whole sea appeared somewhat like milk, and was remarkably luminous.

I rose in haste, and letting down a bucket into the sea, brought some of the water on board and took it down to the cabin to examine it ; but no sooner did I approach the light than the strange appearance disappeared, and when I removed the cabin lamp the luminous light appeared again. I was much puzzled with this, and took up a little of the water in the hollow of my hand and then let it run off, when I found that the luminous substance was left behind on my

palm. I ran with it to the lamp, but when I got there it was gone. I found, however, that when I went into the dark my hand shone again; so I took the large glass of the ship's telescope and examined my hand minutely, when I found that there were on it one or two small patches of a clear transparent substance like jelly, which were so thin as to be almost invisible to the naked eye. Thus I came to know that the beautiful phosphoric light, which I had so often admired before, was caused by animals, for I had no doubt that these were of the same kind as the medusæ or jelly-fish which are seen in all parts of the world.

On the evening of my fourteenth day I was awakened out of a nap into which I had fallen by a loud cry, and starting up I gazed around me. I was surprised and delighted to see a large albatross soaring majestically over the ship. I immediately took it into my head that this was the albatross I had seen at Penguin Island. I had, of course, no good reason for supposing this, but the idea occurred to me, I know not why, and I cherished it, and regarded the bird with as much affection as if he had been an old friend. He kept me company all that day, and left me as night fell.

Next morning, as I stood motionless and with heavy eyes at the helm—for I had not slept well—I began to weary anxiously for daylight, and peered towards the horizon, where I thought I observed something like a black cloud against the dark sky. Being always on the alert for squalls, I ran to the bow. There could be no doubt it was a squall, and as I listened I thought I heard the murmur of the coming gale. Instantly I began to work might and main at my cumbrous tackle for shortening sail, and in the course of an hour and a half had the most of it reduced—the top-sail yards down on the caps, the top-sails clewed up, the sheets hauled in, the main and fore peaks lowered, and the flying-jib down. While thus engaged the dawn advanced, and I cast an occasional furtive glance ahead in the midst of my labour. But now that things were prepared for the worst, I ran forward again and looked anxiously over the bow. I now heard the roar of the waves distinctly, and as a single ray of the rising sun gleamed over the ocean I saw—what! could it be that I was dreaming?—that magnificent breaker with its ceaseless roar!—that mountain top!—yes, once more I beheld the Coral Island!

CHAPTER XXIX.

The effect of a cannon-shot—A happy reunion of a somewhat moist nature—Retrospects and explanations—An awful dive—New plans—The last of the Coral Island.

I ALMOST fell upon the deck with the tumult of mingled emotions that filled my heart as I gazed ardently towards my beautiful island. It was still many miles away, but sufficiently near to enable me to trace distinctly the well-remembered outlines of the two mountains. My first impulse was to utter an exclamation of gratitude for being carried to my former happy home in safety; my second, to jump up, clap my hands, shout, and run up and down the deck, with no other object in view than that of giving vent to my excited feelings. Then I went below for the telescope, and spent nearly ten minutes of the utmost impatience in vainly trying to get a focus, and in rubbing

the skin nearly off my eyes, before I discovered that having taken off the large glass to examine the phosphoric water with I had omitted to put it on again.

After that I looked up impatiently at the sails, which I now regretted having lowered so hastily, and for a moment thought of hoisting the main-top sail again; but recollecting that it would take me full half a day to accomplish, and that, at the present rate of sailing, two hours would bring me to the island, I immediately dismissed the idea.

The remainder of the time I spent in making feverish preparations for arriving and seeing my dear comrades. I remembered that they were not in the habit of rising before six, and as it was now only three, I hoped to arrive before they were awake. Moreover, I set about making ready to let go the anchor, resolving in my own mind that, as I knew the depth of water in the passage of the reef and within the lagoon, I would run the schooner in and bring up opposite the bower. Fortunately the anchor was hanging at the cat-head, otherwise I should never have been able to use it. Now, I had only to cut the tackling, and it would drop of its own weight. After searching among the flags, I found the terrible black one, which I ran up to the peak. While I was doing this a thought struck me. I went to the powder-magazine, brought up a blank cartridge and loaded the big brass gun, which, it will be remembered, was unhoused when we set sail, and as I had no means of housing it, there it had stood, bristling alike at fair weather and foul all the voyage. I took care to grease its mouth well, and before leaving the fore part of the ship, thrust the poker into the fire.

All was now ready. A steady five-knot breeze was blowing, so that I was now not more than quarter of a mile from the reef. I was soon at the entrance, and as the schooner glided quickly through, I glanced affectionately at the huge breaker, as if it had been the same one I had seen there when I bade adieu, as I feared for ever, to the island. On coming opposite the Water Garden, I put the helm hard down. The schooner came round with a rapid, graceful bend, and lost way just opposite the bower. Running forward, I let go the anchor, caught up the red-hot poker, applied it to the brass gun, and saluted the mountains with a *bang* such as had only once before broke their slumbering echoes!

Effective although it was, however, it was scarcely equal to the bang with which, instantly after, Peterkin bounded from the bower, in scanty costume, his eyeballs starting from his head with surprise and terror. One gaze he gave, one yell, and then fled into the bushes like a wild cat. The next moment Jack went through exactly the same performance, the only difference being that his movements were less like those of Jack-in-the-box, though not less vigorous and rapid than those of Peterkin.

"Hallo!" I shouted, almost mad with joy, "what ho! Peterkin! Jack! hallo! it's me!"

My shout was just in time to arrest them. They halted and turned round, and the instant I repeated the cry I saw that they recognized my voice, by both of them running at full speed towards the beach. I could no longer contain myself. Throwing off my jacket, I jumped overboard at the same moment that Jack bounded into the sea. In another moment we met in deep water, clasped

each other round the neck, and sank, as a matter of course, to the bottom ! We were well-nigh choked, and instantly struggled to the surface, where Peterkin was sputtering about like a wounded duck, laughing and crying by turns, and choking himself with salt water !

It would be impossible to convey to my reader, by description, an adequate conception of the scene that followed my landing on the beach, as we stood embracing each other indiscriminately in our dripping garments, and giving utterance to incoherent rhapsodies, mingled with wild shouts. It can be more easily imagined than described, so I will draw a curtain over this part of my history, and carry the reader forward over an interval of three days.

During the greater part of that period Peterkin did nothing but roast pigs, taro, and bread-fruit, and ply me with plantains, plums, potatoes, and cocoa-nuts, while I related to him and Jack the terrible and wonderful adventures I had gone through since we last met. After I had finished the account, they made me go all over it again ; and when I had concluded the second recital, I had to go over it again, while they commented upon it piecemeal. They were much affected by what I told them of the probable fate of Avatea, and Peterkin could by no means brook the idea of the poor girl being converted into a *long pig* ! As for Jack, he clinched his teeth, and shook his fist towards the sea, saying at the same time that he was sorry he had not broken Tararo's head, and he only hoped that one day he should be able to plant his knuckles on the bridge of that chief's nose ! After they had "pumped me dry," as Peterkin said, I begged to be informed of what had happened to them during my long absence, and particularly as to how they got out of the Diamond Cave.

"Well, you must know," began Jack, "after you had dived out of the cave, on the day you were taken away from us, we waited very patiently for half-an-hour, not expecting you to return before the end of that time. Then we began to upbraid you for staying so long, when you knew we would be anxious ; but when an hour passed, we became alarmed, and I resolved at all hazards to dive out, and see what had become of you, although I felt for poor Peterkin, because, as he truly said, 'If you never come back I'm shut up here for life.' !However, I promised not to run any risk, and he let me go ; which, to say truth, I thought very courageous of him !"

"I should just think it was," interrupted Peterkin, looking at Jack over the edge of a monstrous potato which he happened to be devouring at the time.

"Well," continued Jack, "you may guess my consternation when you did not answer to my hallo. At first I imagined that the pirates must have killed you, and left you in the bush or thrown you into the sea ; then it occurred to me that this would have served no end of theirs, so I came to the conclusion that they must have carried you away with them. As this thought struck me, I observed the pirate schooner standing away to the nor'ard, almost hull down on the horizon, and I sat down on the rocks to watch her as she slowly sank from my sight. And I tell you, Ralph my boy, that I shed more tears that time at losing you than I have done, I verily believe, all my life before—"

"Pardon me, Jack, for interrupting," said Peterkin ; "surely you must be mistaken in that : you've often told me that when you were a baby you used to howl and roar from morning to—"

"Hold your tongue, Peterkin," cried Jack. "Well, after the schooner had disappeared, I dived back into the cave, much to Peterkin's relief, and told him what I had seen. We sat down and had a long talk over this matter, and then we agreed to make a regular, systematic search through the woods, so as to make sure at least that you had not been killed. But now we thought of the difficulty of getting out of the cave without your help. Peterkin became dreadfully nervous when he thought of this; and I must confess that I felt some alarm, for, of course, I could not hope alone to take him out so quickly as we two together had brought him in; and he himself vowed that, if we had been a moment longer with him that time, he would have had to take a breath of salt water. However, there was no help for it, and I endeavoured to calm his fears as well as I could: 'for,' said I, 'you can't live here, Peterkin;' to which he replied, 'Of course not, Jack; I can only die here, and as that's not at all desirable, you had better propose something.' So I suggested that he should take a good long breath, and trust himself to me.

"'Might we not make a large bag of cocoa-nut cloth, into which I could shove my head, and tie it tight round my neck?' he asked, with a haggard smile. 'It might let me get one breath under water!'

"'No use,' said I; 'it would fill in a moment and suffocate you. I see nothing for it, Peterkin, if you really can't keep your breath so long, but to let me knock you down, and carry you out while in a state of insensibility.'

"But Peterkin didn't relish this idea. He seemed to fear that I could not be able to measure the exact force of the blow, and might, on the one hand, hit him so softly as to render a second or third blow necessary, which would be very uncomfortable; or, on the other hand, give him such a smash as would entirely spoil his figure-head, or mayhap knock the life out of him altogether! At last I got him persuaded to try to hold his breath, and commit himself to me; so he agreed, and down we went. But I had not got him half-way through when he began to struggle and kick like a wild bull, burst from my grasp, and hit against the roof of the tunnel. I was, therefore, obliged to force him back into the cave again, where he rose panting to the surface. In short, he had lost his presence of mind, and—"

"Nothing of the sort," cried Peterkin indignantly, "I had only lost my wind; and if I had not had presence of mind enough to kick as I did, I should have bu'st in your arms!"

"Well, well, so be it," resumed Jack, with a smile; but the upshot of it was, that we had to hold another consultation on the point, and I really believe that, had it not been for a happy thought of mine, we should have been consulting there yet."

"I wish we had," again interrupted Peterkin, with a sigh.—"I'm sure, Ralph, if I had thought that you were coming back again, I would willingly have waited your return for months, rather than have endured the mental agony which I went through! But proceed."

"The thought was this," continued Jack, "that I should tie Peterkin's hands and feet with cords, and then lash him firmly to a stout pole about five feet long, in order to render him quite powerless, and keep him straight and stiff. You should have seen his face of horror, Ralph, when I suggested this; but he came to see that it was his only chance, and told me to set about it as fast as I could; 'for,'

said he, 'this is no jokin', Jack, *I* can tell you, and the sooner it's done the better.' I soon produced the cordage and a suitable pole, with which I returned to the cave, and lashed him as stiff and straight as an Egyptian mummy; and, to say truth, he was no bad representation of what an English mummy would be, if there were such things, for he was as white as a dead man.

"'Now,' said Peterkin, in a tremulous voice, 'swim with me as near to the edge of the hole as you can before you dive, then let me take a long breath, and as I shan't be able to speak after I taken it, you'll watch my face, and the moment you see me wink—dive! And oh,' he added earnestly, 'pray don't be long!'

"I promised to pay the strictest attention to his wishes, and swam with him to the outlet of the cave. Here I paused. 'Now then,' said I, 'pull away at the wind, lad.'

"Peterkin drew in a breath so long that I could not help thinking of the frog in the fable, that wanted to swell itself as big as the ox. Then I looked into his face earnestly. Slap went the lid of his right eye; down went my head, and up went my heels. We shot through the passage like an arrow, and rose to the surface of the open sea before you could count twenty.

"Peterkin had taken in such an awful load of wind that, on reaching the free air, he let it out with a yell loud enough to have been heard a mile off, and then the change in his feelings was so sudden and great, that he did not wait till we landed, but began, tied up as he was to shout and sing for joy as I supported him with my left arm to the shore. However, in the middle of a laugh that a hyena might have envied, I let him accidentally slip, which extinguished him in a moment.

"After this happy deliverance, we immediately began our search for your dead body, Ralph; and you have no idea how low our hearts sank as we set off day after day, to examine the valleys and mountain sides with the utmost care. In about three weeks we completed the survey of the whole island, and had at least the satisfaction of knowing that you had not been killed. But it occurred to us that you might have been thrown into the sea, so we examined the sands and the lagoon carefully, and afterwards went all round the outer reef. One day, while we were upon the reef, Peterkin espied a small dark object lying among the rocks which seemed to be quite different from the surrounding stones. We hastened towards the spot, and found it to be a small keg. On knocking out the head we discovered that it was gunpowder."

"It was I who sent you that, Jack," said I, with a smile.

"Fork out!" cried Peterkin energetically, starting to his feet and extending his open hand to Jack. "Down with the money, sir, else I'll have you shut up for life in a debtor's prison the moment we return to England!"

"I'll give an I O U in the meantime," returned Jack, laughing, "so sit down and be quiet.—The fact is, Ralph, when we discovered this keg of powder, Peterkin immediately took me a bet of a thousand pounds that you had something to do with it, and I took him a bet of ten thousand that you had not."

"Peterkin was right then," said I, explaining how the thing had occurred.

"Well, we found it very useful," continued Jack, "although some

of it had got a little damp; and we furbished up the old pistol, with which Peterkin is a crack shot now. But to continue:—We did not find any other vestige of you on the reef, and finally gave up all hope of ever seeing you again. After this the island became a dreary place to us, and we began to long for a ship to heave in sight and take us off. But now that you're back again, my dear fellow, it looks as bright and cheerful as it used to do, and I love it as much as ever.

"And now," continued Jack, "I have a great desire to visit some of the other islands of the South Seas. Here we have a first-rate schooner at our disposal, so I don't see what should hinder us."

"Just the very thing I was going to propose," cried Peterkin. "I vote for starting at once."

"Well, then," said Jack, "it seems to me that we could not do better than shape our course for the island on which Avatea lives, and endeavour to persuade Tararo to let her marry the black fellow to whom she is engaged, instead of making a long pig of her. If he has a spark of gratitude in him he'll do it. Besides, having become champions for this girl once before, it behoves us as true knights, not to rest until we have set her free; at least all the heroes in all the story-books I have ever read would count it foul disgrace to leave such a work unfinished."

"I'm sure I don't know or care what your knights in story-books would do," said Peterkin; "but I'm certain that it would be capital fun, so I'm your man whenever you want me."

This plan of Jack's was quite in accordance with his romantic, impulsive nature; and having made up his mind to save this black girl, he could not rest until the thing was commenced.

"But there may be great danger in this attempt," he said, at the end of a long consultation on the subject. "Will you, lads, go with me in spite of this?"

"Go with you?" we repeated in the same breath.

"Can you doubt it?" said I.

"For a moment," added Peterkin.

I need scarcely say that having made up our minds to go on this enterprise, we lost no time in making preparations to quit the island; and as the schooner was well laden with stores of every kind for a long cruise, we had little to do except to add to our abundant supply a quantity of cocoa-nuts, bread-fruit, taro, yams, plums, and potatoes, chiefly with the view of carrying the fragrance of our dear island along with us as long as we could.

When all was ready, we paid a farewell visit to the different familiar spots where most of our time had been spent. We ascended the mountain top, and gazed for the last time at the rich green foliage in the valleys, the white sandy beach, the placid lagoon, and the barrier coral reef with its crested breakers. Then we descended to Spouting Cliff, and looked down at the pale-green monster which we had made such fruitless efforts to spear in days gone by. From this we hurried to the Water Garden, and took a last dive into its clear water, and a last gambol amongst its coral groves. I hurried out before my companions, and dressed in haste, in order to have a long examination of my tank, which Peterkin, in the fulness of his heart, had tended with the utmost care, as being a vivid remembrancer of me rather than out of love for natural history. It was in superb condition—the water was as clear and pellucid as crystal; the red

and green sea-weed of the most brilliant hues ; the red, purple, yellow, green, and striped anemones fully expanded, and stretching out their arms as if to welcome and embrace their former master ; the star-fish, zoophytes, sea-pens, and other innumerable marine insects looking fresh and beautiful ; and the crabs, as Peterkin said, looking as wide awake, impertinent, rampant, and pugnacious as ever. It was indeed so lovely and so interesting that I would scarcely allow myself to be torn away from it.

Last of all, we returned to the bower and collected the few articles we possessed, such as the axe, the pencil-case, the broken telescope, the pen-knife, the hook made from the brass ring, and the sail-needle, with which we had landed on the island ; also the long boots and the pistol, besides several curious articles of costume which we had manufactured from time to time.

These we conveyed on board in our little boat, after having carved our names on a chip of iron-wood, thus :—

JACK MARTIN,
RALPH ROVER,
PETERKIN GAY,

which we fixed up inside of the bower. The boat was then hoisted on board and the anchor weighed ; which latter operation cost us great labour and much time, as the anchor was so heavy that we could not move it without the aid of my complex machinery of blocks and pulleys. A steady breeze was blowing off shore when we set sail, at a little before sunset. It swept us quickly past the reef and out to sea. The shore grew rapidly more indistinct as the shades of evening fell, while our clipper bark bounded lightly over the waves. Slowly the mountain top sank on the horizon, until it became a mere speck. In another moment the sun and the Coral Island sank together into the broad bosom of the Pacific.

CHAPTER XXX.

The voyage—The island, and a consultation in which danger is scouted as a thing unworthy of consideration—Rats and cats—The native teacher—Awful revelations—Wonderful effects of Christianity.

OUR voyage during the next two weeks was most interesting and prosperous. The breeze continued generally fair, and at all times enabled us to lie our course ; for being, as I have said before, clipper-built, the pirate schooner could lie very close to the wind and make little leeway. We had no difficulty now in managing our sails, for Jack was heavy and powerful, while Peterkin was active as a kitten. Still, however, we were a very insufficient crew for such a vessel, and if any one had proposed to us to make such a voyage in it before we had been forced to go through so many hardships from necessity, we would have turned away with pity from the individual making such proposal as from a madman. I pondered this a good deal, and at last concluded that men do not know how much they are capable of doing till they try, and that we should never give way to despair in any undertaking, however difficult it may seem—always supposing, however, that our cause is a good one, and that we can ask the divine blessing on it.

Although, therefore, we could not manage our sails easily, we nevertheless found that my pulleys were of much service to us in some things; though Jack did laugh heartily at the uncouth arrangement of ropes and blocks, which had, to a sailor's eye a very lumbering and clumsy appearance. But I will not drag my reader through the details of this voyage. Suffice it to say that, after an agreeable sail of about three weeks, we arrived at the island of Mango, which I recognised at once from the description that the pirate Bill had given me of it during one of our conversations.

As soon as we came within sight of it we hove the ship to and held a council of war.

"Now, boys," said Jack, as we seated ourselves beside him on the cabin skylight, "before we go further in this business, we must go over the pros and cons of it; for although you have so generously consented to stick by me through thick and thin, it would be unfair did I not see that you thoroughly understand the danger of what we are about to attempt."

"Oh, bother the danger!" cried Peterkin. "I wonder to hear *you*, Jack, talk of danger. When a fellow begins to talk about it, he'll soon come to magnify it to such a degree that he'll not be fit to face it when it comes, no more than a suckin' baby."

"Nay, Peterkin," replied Jack gravely, "I won't be jested out of it. I grant you that when we've once resolved to act, and have made up our minds what to do, we should think no more of danger. But before we have so resolved it behoves us to look at it straight in the face, and examine into it, and walk round it; for if we flinch at a distant view, we're sure to run away when the danger is near.—Now I understand from you, Ralph, that the island is inhabited by thorough-going out-and-out cannibals, whose principal law is, 'Might is right, and the weakest goes to the wall'?"

"Yes," said I; "so Bill gave me to understand. He told me, however, that at the southern side of it the missionaries had obtained a footing amongst an insignificant tribe. A native teacher had been sent there by the Wesleyans, who had succeeded in persuading the chief at that part to embrace Christianity. But instead of that being of any advantage to our enterprise, it seems the very reverse; for the chief Tararo is a determined heathen, and persecutes the Christians—who are far too weak in numbers to offer any resistance—and looks with dislike upon all white men, whom he regards as propagators of the new faith."

"'Tis a pity," said Jack, "that the Christian tribe is so small, for we shall scarcely be safe under their protection, I fear. If Tararo takes it into his head to wish for our vessel, or to kill ourselves, he could take us from them by force. You say that the native missionary talks English?"

"So I believe."

"Then, what I propose is this," said Jack. "We will run round to the south side of the island, and cast anchor off the Christian village. We are too far away just now to have been descried by any of the savages, so we shall get there unobserved, and have time to arrange our plans before the heathen tribe knows of our presence. But in doing this we run the risk of being captured by the ill-disposed tribes, and being very ill-used, if not—a—"

"Roasted alive and eaten," cried Peterkin. "Come out with it, .

Jack. According to your own showing, it's well to look the danger straight in the face!"

"Well, that is the worst of it, certainly. Are you prepared, then, to take your chance of that?"

"I've been prepared and had my mind made up long ago," cried Peterkin, swaggering about the deck with his hands thrust into his breeches pockets. "The fact is, Jack, I don't believe that Tararo will be so ungrateful as to eat us; and I'm quite sure that he'll be too happy to grant us whatever we ask; so the sooner we go in and win the better."

Peterkin was wrong, however, in his estimate of savage gratitude, as the sequel will show.

The schooner was now put before the wind, and after making a long run to the southward, we put about and beat up for the south side of Mango, where we arrived before sunset, and hove to off the coral reef. Here we awaited the arrival of a canoe, which immediately put off on our rounding to. When it arrived, a mild-looking native of apparently forty years of age, came on board, and taking off his straw hat, made us a low bow. He was clad in a respectable suit of European clothes; and the first words he uttered, as he stepped up to Jack and shook hands with him, were,—

"Good day, gentlemen. We are happy to see you at Mango; you are heartily welcome."

After returning his salutation, Jack exclaimed, "You must be the native missionary teacher of whom I have heard; are you not?"

"I am. I have the joy to be a servant of the Lord Jesus at this station."

"You're the very man I want to see, then," replied Jack; "that's lucky. Come down to the cabin, friend, and have a glass of wine. I wish particularly to speak with you. My men there" (pointing to Peterkin and me) "will look after your people."

"Thank you," said the teacher, as he followed Jack to the cabin; "I do not drink wine or any strong drink."

"Oh! then there's lots of water, and you can have biscuit."

"Now, 'pon my word, that's cool!" said Peterkin: "his *men*, forsooth! Well, since we are to be men, we may as well come it as strong over these black chaps as we can—Hallo, there!" he cried to the half-dozen of natives who stood upon the deck, gazing in wonder at all they saw, "here's for you;" and he handed them a tray of broken biscuit and a can of water. Then thrusting his hands into his pockets, he walked up and down the deck with an enormous swagger, whistling vociferously.

In about half-an-hour Jack and the teacher came on deck, and the latter, bidding us a cheerful good-evening, entered his canoe and paddled to the shore. When he was gone, Peterkin stepped up to Jack, and touching his cap, said,—

"Well, captain, have you any communications to make to your men?"

"Yes," cried Jack: "ready about, mind the helm and clew up your tongue, while I con the schooner through the passage in the reef. The teacher, who seems a first-rate fellow, says its quite deep, and good anchorage within the lagoon close to the shore."

While the vessel was slowly advancing to her anchorage, under a light breeze, Jack explained to us that Avatea was still on the island,

living amongst the heathens ; that she had expressed a strong desire to join the Christians, but Tararo would not let her, and kept her constantly in close confinement.

"Moreover," continued Jack, "I find that she belongs to one of the Samoan Islands, where Christianity had been introduced long before her capture by the heathens of a neighbouring island ; and the very day after she was taken, she was to have joined the church which had been planted there by the London Missionary Society. The teacher tells me, too, that the poor girl has fallen in love with a Christian chief, who lives on an island some fifty miles or so to the south of this one, and that she is meditating a desperate attempt at escape. So, you see, we have come in the nick of time—I fancy that the chief is the fellow whom you heard of, Ralph, at the island of Emo.—Besides all this, the heathen savages are at war among themselves, and there's to be a battle fought the day after to-morrow, in which the principal leader is Tararo ; so that we'll not be able to commence our negotiations with the rascally chief till the day after."

The village off which we anchored was beautifully situated at the head of a small bay, from the margin of which trees of every description peculiar to the tropics rose in the richest luxuriance to the summit of a hilly ridge, which was the line of demarcation between the possessions of the Christians and those of the neighbouring heathen chief.

The site of the settlement was an extensive plot of flat land, stretching in a gentle slope from the sea to the mountain. The cottages stood several hundred yards from the beach, and were protected from the glare of the sea by the rich foliage of rows of large Barringtonia and other trees which girt the shore. The village was about a mile in length, and perfectly straight, with a wide road down the middle, on either side of which were rows of the tufted-topped ti tree, whose delicate and beautiful blossoms, hanging beneath their plume-crested tops, added richness to the scene. The cottages of the natives were built beneath these trees, and were kept in the most excellent order, each having a little garden in front, tastefully laid out and planted, while the walks were covered with black and white pebbles.

Every house had doors and Venetian windows, painted partly with lamp black made from the candle-nut, and partly with red ochre, which contrasted powerfully with the dazzling coral lime that covered the walls. On a prominent position stood a handsome church, which was quite a curiosity in its way. It was a hundred feet long by fifty feet broad, and was seated throughout to accommodate upwards of two thousand persons. It had six large folding-doors, and twelve windows with Venetian blinds ; and although a large and substantial edifice, it had been built, we were told by the teacher, in the space of two months ! There was not a single iron nail in the fabric, and the natives had constructed it chiefly with their stone and bone axes and other tools, having only one or two axes or tools of European manufacture. Everything around this beautiful spot wore an aspect of peace and plenty ; and as we dropped our anchor within a stone's-cast of the substantial coral wharf, I could not avoid contrasting it with the wretched village of Emo, where I had witnessed so many frightful scenes. When the teacher afterwards told me that the people of this

tribe had become converts only a year previous to our arrival, and that they had been living before that in the practice of the most bloody system of idolatry, I could not refrain from exclaiming, "What a convincing proof that Christianity is of God!"

On landing from our little boat, we were received with a warm welcome by the teacher and his wife; the latter being also a native, clothed in a simple European gown and a straw bonnet. The shore was lined with hundreds of natives, whose persons were all more or less clothed with native cloth. Some of the men had on a kind of poncho formed of this cloth, their legs being uncovered; others wore clumsily-fashioned trousers, and no upper garment except hats made of straw and cloth. Many of the dresses, both of women and men, were grotesque enough, being very bad imitations of the European garb; but all wore a dress of some sort or other. They seemed very glad to see us, and crowded round us as the teacher led the way to his dwelling, where we were entertained, in the most sumptuous manner, on baked pig and all the varieties of fruit and vegetables that the island produced. We were much annoyed, however, by the rats: they seemed to run about the house like domestic animals. As we sat at table, one of them peeped up at us over the edge of the cloth, close to Peterkin's elbow, who floored it with a blow on the snout from his knife, exclaiming as he did so,—

"I say, Mister Teacher, why don't you set traps for these brutes? Surely you are not fond of them!"

"No," replied the teacher with a smile; "we would be glad to get rid of them if we could; but if we were to trap all the rats on the island, it would occupy our whole time."

"Are they, then, so numerous?" inquired Jack.

"They swarm everywhere. The poor heathens on the north side eat them, and think them very sweet. So did my people formerly; but they do not eat so many now, because the missionary who was last here expressed disgust at it. The poor people asked if it was wrong to eat rats; and he told them it was certainly not wrong, but that the people of England would be much disgusted were they asked to eat rats."

We had not been an hour in the house of this kind-hearted man when we were convinced of the truth of his statement as to their numbers; for the rats ran about the floors in dozens, and during our meal two men were stationed at the table to keep them off!

"What a pity you have no cats!" said Peterkin, as he aimed a blow at another reckless intruder, and missed it.

"We would indeed be glad to have a few," rejoined the teacher, "but they are difficult to be got. The hogs, we find, are very good rat-killers, but they do not seem to be able to keep the numbers down. I have heard that they are better than cats."

As the teacher said this, his good-natured black face was wrinkled with a smile of merriment. Observing that I had noticed it, he said:—

"I smiled just now when I remembered the fate of the first cat that was taken to Rarotonga. This is one of the stations of the London Missionary Society. It, like our own, is infested with rats, and a cat was brought at last to the island. It was a large black one. On being turned loose, instead of being content to stay among men, the cat took to the mountains, and lived in a wild state, sometimes

paying visits during the night to the houses of the natives ; some of whom, living at a distance from the settlement, had not heard of the cat's arrival, and were dreadfully frightened in consequence, calling it a 'monster of the deep,' and flying in terror away from it. One night the cat—feeling a desire for company, I suppose—took its way to the house of a chief who had recently been converted to Christianity, and had begun to learn to read and pray. The chief's wife, who was sitting awake at his side while he slept, beheld with horror two fires glistening in the doorway, and heard with surprise a mysterious voice. Almost petrified with fear, she awoke her husband, and began to upbraid him for forsaking his old religion and burning his god, who, she declared, was now come to be avenged of them. 'Get up and pray ! get up and pray !' she cried. The chief arose, and on opening his eyes beheld the same glaring lights and heard the same ominous sound. Impelled by the extreme urgency of the case, he commenced, with all possible vehemence, to vociferate the alphabet, as a prayer to God to deliver them from the vengeance of Satan ! On hearing this, the cat, as much alarmed as themselves, fled precipitately away, leaving the chief and his wife congratulating themselves on the efficacy of their prayer."

We were much diverted with this anecdote, which the teacher related in English so good that we certainly could not have supposed him a native but for the colour of his face and the foreign accent in his tone. Next day we walked out with this interesting man, and were much entertained and instructed by his conversation, as we rambled through the cool shady groves of bananas, citrons, limes, and other trees, or sauntered among the cottages of the natives, and watched them while they laboured diligently in the taro beds or manufactured the tapa or native cloth. To some of these Jack put questions through the medium of the missionary ; and the replies were such as to surprise us at the extent of their knowledge. Indeed, Peterkin very truly remarked that "they seemed to know a considerable deal more than Jack himself !"

Among other pieces of interesting information that we obtained was the following, in regard to coral formations :—

"The islands of the Pacific," said our friend, "are of three different kinds or classes. Those of the first class are volcanic, mountainous, and wild ; some shooting their jagged peaks into the clouds at an elevation of ten and fifteen thousand feet. Those of the second class are of crystallized limestone, and vary in height from one hundred to five hundred feet. The hills on these are not so wild or broken as those of the first class, but are richly clothed with vegetation, and very beautiful. I have no doubt that the Coral Island on which you were wrecked was one of this class. They are supposed to have been upheaved from the bottom of the sea by volcanic agency, but they are not themselves volcanic in their nature, neither are they of coral formation. Those of the third class are the low coralline islands, usually having lagoons of water in their midst ; they are very numerous.

"As to the manner in which coral islands and reefs are formed, there are various opinions on this point. I will give you what seems to me the most probable theory,—a theory, I may add, which is held by some of the good and scientific missionaries. It is well known that there is much lime in salt water ; it is also known that coral is

composed of lime. It is supposed that the polypes, or coral insects, have the power of attracting this lime to their bodies ; and with this material they build their little cells or habitations. They choose the summit of a volcano, or the top of a submarine mountain, as a foundation on which to build ; for it is found that they never work at any great depth below the surface. On this they work ; the polypes on the mountain top, of course, reach the surface first, then those at the outer edges reach the top sooner than the others between them and the centre, thus forming the coral reef surrounding the lagoon of water and the central island ; after that the insects within the lagoon cease working. When the surface of water is reached, these myriads of wonderful creatures die. Then birds visit the spot, and seeds are thus conveyed thither, which take root and spring up, and flourish. Thus are commenced those coralline islets of which you have seen so many in these seas. The reefs round the large islands are formed in a similar manner. When we consider," added the missionary, "the smallness of the architects used by our heavenly Father in order to form those lovely and innumerable islands, we are filled with much of that feeling which induced the ancient king to exclaim, 'How manifold, O Lord, are Thy works ! in wisdom hast Thou made them all.'"

We all heartily agreed with the missionary in this sentiment, and felt not a little gratified to find that the opinions which Jack and I had been led to form from personal observations on our Coral Island were thus to a great extent corroborated.

The missionary also gave us an account of the manner in which Christianity had been introduced among them. He said : "When missionaries were first sent here, three years ago, a small vessel brought them ; and the chief, who is now dead, promised to treat well the two native teachers who were left with their wives on the island. But scarcely had the boat which landed them returned to the ship, than the natives began to maltreat their guests, taking away all they possessed, and offering them further violence, so that when the boat was sent in haste to fetch them away, the clothes of both men and women were torn nearly off their backs.

"Two years after this the vessel visited them again, and I, being in her, volunteered to land alone, without any goods whatever, begging that my wife might be brought to me the following year—that is, *this* year ; and, as you see, she is with me. But the surf was so high that the boat could not land me ; so with nothing on but my trousers and shirt, and with a few catechisms and a Bible, besides some portions of the Scripture translated into the Mango tongue, I sprang into the sea, and swam ashore on the crest of a breaker. I was instantly dragged up the beach by the natives ; who, on finding I had nothing worth having upon me, let me alone. I then made signs to my friends in the ship to leave me ; which they did. At first the natives listened to me in silence, but laughed at what I said while I preached the gospel of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ to them. Afterwards they treated me ill sometimes ; but I persevered, and continued to dwell among them, and dispute, and exhort them to give up their sinful ways of life, burn their idols, and come to Jesus.

"About a month after I landed, I heard that the chief was dead. He was the father of the present chief, who is now a most consistent member of the church. It is a custom here that when a chief dies his wives are strangled and buried with him. Knowing this, I hastened

to his house to endeavour to prevent such cruelty if possible. When I arrived, I found two of the wives had already been killed, while another was in the act of being strangled. I pleaded hard for her, but it was too late; she was already dead. I then entreated the son to spare the fourth wife; and, after much hesitation, my prayer was granted: but in half-an-hour afterwards this poor woman repented of being unfaithful, as she termed it, to her husband, and insisted on on being strangled; which was accordingly done.

"All this time the chief's son was walking up and down before his father's house with a brow black as thunder. When he entered I went in with him, and found, to my surprise, that his father was *not* dead! The old man was sitting on a mat in a corner, with an expression of placid resignation on his face.

"'Why,' said I, 'have you strangled your father's wives before he is dead?'

"To this the son replied, 'He is dead. That is no longer my father. He is as good as dead now. He is to be *buried alive*.'

"I now remembered having heard that it is a custom among the Feejee islanders, that when the reigning chief grows old or infirm, the heir to the chieftainship has a right to depose his father; in which case he is considered as dead, and is buried alive. The young chief was now about to follow this custom, and despite my earnest entreaties and pleadings, the old chief was buried that day before my eyes in the same grave with his four strangled wives! Oh, my heart groaned when I saw this! and I prayed to God to open the hearts of these poor creatures, as he had already opened mine, and pour into them the light and the love of the gospel of Jesus. My prayer was answered very soon. A week afterwards, the son, who was now chief of the tribe came to me, bearing his god on his shoulders, and groaning beneath its weight. Flinging it down at my feet, he desired me to burn it!

"You may conceive how overjoyed I was at this. I sprang up and embraced him, while I shed tears of joy. Then we made a fire and burned the god to ashes, amid an immense concourse of the people, who seemed terrified at what was being done, and shrank back when we burned the god, expecting some signal vengeance to be taken upon us; but seeing that nothing happened, they changed their minds, and thought that our God must be the true one after all. From that time the mission prospered steadily! and now, while there is not a single man in the tribe who has not burned his household gods and become a convert to Christianity, there are not a few, I hope, who are true followers of the Lamb, having been plucked as brands from the burning by Him who can save unto the uttermost. I will not tell you more of our progress at this time; but you see," he said, waving his hand around him, "the village and the church did not exist a year ago!"

We were indeed much interested in this account, and I could not help again in my heart praying God to prosper those missionary societies that send such inestimable blessings to these islands of dark and bloody idolatry. The teacher also added that the other tribes were very indignant at this one for having burned its gods and threatened to destroy it altogether, but they have done nothing yet. "And if they should," said the teacher, "the Lord is on our side; of whom shall we be afraid?"

"Have the missionaries many stations in these seas?" inquired Jack.

"Oh yes. The London Missionary Society have a great many in the Tahiti group, and other islands in that quarter. Then the Wesleyans have the Feejee Islands all to themselves, and the Americans have many stations in other groups. But still, my friend, there are hundreds of islands here the natives of which have never heard of Jesus, or the good word of God, or the Holy Spirit; and thousands are living and dying in the practice of those terrible sins and bloody murders of which you have already heard. I trust, my friends," he added looking earnestly into our faces—"I trust that if you ever return to England, you will tell your Christian friends that the horrors which they hear of in regard to these islands are *literally true*, and that when they have heard the worst, the '*half has not been told them*;' for there are perpetrated here foul deeds of darkness of which man may not speak. You may also tell them," he said, looking around with a smile, while a tear of gratitude trembled in his eye and rolled down his coal-black cheek—"tell them of the blessings that the gospel has wrought *here!*"

We assured our friend that we would certainly not forget his request. On returning towards the village, about noon, we remarked on the beautiful whiteness of the cottages.

"That is owing to the lime with which they are plastered," said the teacher. "When the natives were converted, as I have described I set them to work to build cottages for themselves, and also this handsome church which you see. When the framework and other parts of the house were up, I sent the people to fetch coral from the sea. They brought immense quantities. Then I made them cut wood and piling the coral above it, set it on fire.

"Look! look!" cried the poor people, in amazement; 'what wonderful people the Christians are! He is roasting stones. We shall not need taro or bread-fruit any more; we may eat stones!'

"But their surprise was still greater when the coral was reduced to a fine soft white powder. They immediately set up a great shout, and mingling the lime with water, rubbed their faces and their bodies all over with it, and ran through the village screaming with delight. They were also much surprised at another thing they saw me do. I wished to make some household furniture, and constructed a turning-lathe to assist me. The first thing that I turned was the leg of a sofa which was no sooner finished than the chief seized it with wonder and delight, and ran through the village exhibiting it to the people, who looked upon it with great admiration. The chief then, tying a string to it hung it round his neck as an ornament! He afterwards told me that if he had seen it before he became a Christian, he would have made it his god!"

As the teacher concluded this anecdote we reached his door. Saying that he had business to attend to, he left us to amuse ourselves as we best could.

"Now, lads," said Jack, turning abruptly towards us, and buttoning up his jacket as he spoke, "I'm off to see the battle. I've no particular fondness for seein' bloodshed, but I must find out the nature o' these fellows and see their customs with my own eyes, so that I may be able to speak of it again, if need be, authoritatively. It's only six miles off, and we don't run much more risk than that of

getting a rap with a stray stone or an overshot arrow. Will you go?"

"To be sure we will," said Peterkin.

"If they chance to see us we'll cut and run for it," added Jack.

"Dear me!" cried Peterkin—"you run! I thought you would scorn to run from any one."

"So I would, if it were my duty to fight," returned Jack coolly; "but as I don't want to fight, and don't intend to fight, if they offer to attack us I'll run away like the veriest coward that ever went by the name of Peterkin. So come along."

CHAPTER XXXI.

A strange and bloody battle—The lion bearded in his den—Frightful scenes of cruelty, and fears for the future.

WE had ascertained from the teacher the direction to the spot on which the battle was to be fought, and after a walk of two hours reached it. The summit of a bare hill was the place chosen; for, unlike most of the other islanders, who are addicted to bush-fighting, those of Mango are in the habit of meeting on open ground. We arrived before the two parties had commenced the deadly struggle, and creeping as close up as we dared among the rocks, we lay and watched them.

The combatants were drawn up face to face, each side ranged in rank four deep. Those in the first row were armed with long spears; the second with clubs to defend the spearmen; the third row was composed of young men with slings; and the fourth consisted of women, who carried baskets of stones for the slingers, and clubs and spears with which to supply the warriors. Soon after we arrived the attack was made with great fury. There was no science displayed. The two bodies of savages rushed headlong upon each other and engaged in a general *mêlée*, and a more dreadful set of men I have never seen. They wore grotesque war-caps made of various substances and decorated with feathers. Their faces and bodies were painted so as to make them look as frightful as possible; and as they brandished their massive clubs, leaped, shouted, yelled, and dashed each other to the ground, I thought I had never seen men look so like demons before.

We were much surprised at the conduct of the women, who seemed to be perfect furies, and hung about the heels of their husbands in order to defend them. One stout young woman we saw whose husband was hard pressed and about to be overcome: she lifted a large stone, and throwing it at his opponent's head, felled him to the earth. But the battle did not last long. The band most distant from us gave way and were routed, leaving eighteen of their comrades dead upon the field. These the victors brained as they lay; and putting some of their brains on leaves went off with them, we were afterwards informed, to their temples, to present them to their gods as an earnest of the human victims who were soon to be brought there.

We hastened back to the Christian village with feelings of the deepest sadness at the sanguinary conflict which we had just witnessed.

Next day, after breakfasting with our friend the teacher, we made preparations for carrying out our plan. At first the teacher endeavoured to dissuade us.

"You do not know," said he, turning to Jack, "the danger you run in venturing amongst these ferocious savages. I feel much pity for poor Avatea; but you are not likely to succeed in saving her, and you may die in the attempt."

"Well," said Jack quietly, "I am not afraid to die in a good cause."

The teacher smiled approvingly at him as he said this, and after a little further conversation agreed to accompany us as interpreter; saying that, although Tararo was unfriendly to him, he had hitherto treated him with respect.

We now went on board the schooner, having resolved to sail round the island and drop anchor opposite the heathen village. We manned her with natives, and hoped to overawe the savages by displaying our brass gun to advantage. The teacher soon after came on board, and setting our sails we put to sea. In two hours more we made the cliffs reverberate with the crash of the big gun, which we fired by way of salute, while we ran the British ensign up to the peak and cast anchor. The commotion on shore showed us that we had struck terror into the hearts of the natives; but seeing that we did not offer to molest them, a canoe at length put off and paddled cautiously towards us. The teacher showed himself, and explaining that we were friends and wished to palaver with the chief, desired the native to go and tell him to come on board.

We waited long and with much impatience for an answer. During this time the native teacher conversed with us again, and told us many things concerning the success of the gospel among those islands; and perceiving that we were by no means so much gratified as we ought to have been at the hearing of such good news, he pressed us more closely in regard to our personal interest in religion, and exhorted us to consider that our souls were certainly in as great danger as those of the wretched heathen whom we pitied so much, if we had not already found salvation in Jesus Christ. "Nay, further," he added, "if such be your unhappy case, you are, in the sight of God, much worse than these savages (forgive me, my young friends, for saying so): for they have no knowledge, no light, and do not profess to believe; while you, on the contrary, have been brought up in the light of the blessed gospel, and call yourselves Christians. These poor savages are indeed the enemies of our Lord; but you, if ye be not true believers, are traitors!"

I must confess that my heart condemned me while the teacher spoke in this earnest manner, and I knew not what to reply. Peterkin, too, did not seem to like it, and I thought would willingly have escaped; but Jack seemed deeply impressed, and wore an anxious expression on his naturally grave countenance, while he assented to the teacher's remarks and put to him many earnest questions. Meanwhile the natives who composed our crew, having nothing particular to do, had squatted down on the deck and taken out their little books containing the translated portions of the New Testament, along with hymns and spelling-books, and were now busily engaged, some vociferating the alphabet, others learning prayers off by heart, while a few sang hymns—all of them being utterly unmindful of our presence. The teacher soon joined them, and soon afterwards they

all engaged in a prayer which was afterwards translated to us, and proved to be a petition for the success of our undertaking and for the conversion of the heathen.

While we were thus engaged a canoe put off from shore and several savages leaped on deck, one of whom advanced to the teacher and informed him that Tararo could not come on board that day, being busy with some religious ceremonies before the gods, which could on no account be postponed. He was also engaged with a friendly chief who was about to take his departure from the island, and therefore begged that the teacher and his friends would land and pay a visit to him. To this the teacher returned answer that we would land immediately.

"Now, lads," said Jack, as we were about to step into our little boat, "I'm not going to take any weapons with me, and I recommend you to take none either. We are altogether in the power of these savages, and the utmost we could do, if they were to attack us, would be to kill a few of them before we were ourselves overpowered. I think that our only chance of success lies in mild measures; don't you think so?"

To this I assented gladly, and Peterkin replied by laying down a huge bell-mouthed blunderbuss, and divesting himself of a pair of enormous horse-pistols with which he had purposed to overawe the natives! We then jumped into our boat and rowed ashore.

On reaching the beach we were received by a crowd of naked savages, who shouted a rude welcome, and conducted us to a house or shed where a baked pig and a variety of vegetables were prepared for us. Having partaken of these, the teacher begged to be conducted to the chief; but there seemed some hesitation, and after some consultation among themselves one of the men stood forward and spoke to the teacher.

"What says he?" inquired Jack when the savage had concluded.

"He says that the chief is just going to the temple of his god and cannot see us yet; so we must be patient, my friend."

"Well," cried Jack, rising, "if he won't come to see me, I'll e'en go and see him. Besides, I have a great desire to witness their proceedings at this temple of theirs. Will you go with me, friend?"

"I cannot," said the teacher, shaking his head; "I must not go to the heathen temples and witness their inhuman rites, except for the purpose of condemning their wickedness and folly."

"Very good," returned Jack; "then I'll go alone, for I cannot condemn their doings till I have seen them."

Jack arose, and we, having determined to go also, followed him through the banana groves to a rising ground immediately behind the village, on the top of which stood the Buré, or temple, under the dark shade of a group of iron-wood trees. As we went through the village, I was again led to contrast the rude huts and sheds and their almost naked, savage-looking inhabitants with the natives of the Christian village, who, to use the teacher's scriptural expression, were now "clothed and in their right mind."

As we turned into a broad path leading towards the hill, we were arrested by the shouts of an approaching multitude in the rear. Drawing aside into the bushes, we awaited their coming up, and as they drew near we observed that it was a procession of the natives, many of whom were dancing and gesticulating in the most frantic

manner. They had an exceedingly hideous aspect, owing to the black, red, and yellow paints with which their faces and naked bodies were bedaubed. In the midst of these came a band of men carrying three or four planks, on which were seated in rows upwards of a dozen men. I shuddered involuntarily as I recollected the sacrifice of human victims at the island of Emo, and turned with a look of fear to Jack as I said,—

“O Jack! I have a terrible dread that they are going to commit some of their cruel practices on these wretched men. We had better not go to the temple. We shall only be horrified without being able to do any good, for I fear they are going to kill them.”

Jack’s face wore an expression of deep compassion as he said in a low voice, “No fear, Ralph; the sufferings of these poor fellows are over long ago.”

I turned with a start as he spoke, and glancing at the men, who were now quite near to the spot where we stood, saw that they were all dead. They were tied firmly with ropes in a sitting posture on the planks, and seemed, as they bent their sightless eyeballs and grinning mouths over the dancing crew below, as if they were laughing in ghastly mockery at the utter inability of their enemies to hurt them now. These, we discovered afterwards, were the men who had been slain in the battle of the previous day, and were now on their way to be first presented to the gods and then eaten. Behind these came two men leading between them a third, whose hands were pinioned behind his back. He walked with a firm step, and wore a look of utter indifference on his face as they led him along; so that we concluded he was a criminal who was about to receive some slight punishment for his faults. The rear of the procession was brought up by a shouting crowd of women and children, with whom we mingled and followed to the temple.

Here we arrived in a few minutes. The temple was a tall circular building, open at one side. Around it were strewn heaps of human bones and skulls. At a table inside sat the priest, an elderly man with a long gray beard. He was seated on a stool, and before him lay several knives, made of wood, bone, and splinters of bamboo, with which he performed his office of dissecting dead bodies. Farther in lay a variety of articles that had been dedicated to the god, and among them were many spears and clubs. I observed among the latter some with human teeth sticking in them, where the victims had been clubbed in their mouths.

Before this temple the bodies, which were painted with vermilion and soot, were arranged in a sitting posture; and a man called a “dan-vosa” (orator), advanced, and laying his hands on their heads, began to chide them, apparently, in a low bantering tone. What he said we knew not, but as he went on he waxed warm, and at last shouted to them at the top of his lungs, and finally finished by kicking the bodies over and running away, amid the shouts and laughter of the people, who now rushed forward. Seizing the bodies by a leg or an arm, or by the hair of the head, they dragged them over stumps and stones and through sloughs, until they were exhausted. The bodies were then brought back to the temple and dissected by the priest, after which they were taken out to be baked.

Close to the temple a large fire was kindled, in which stones were heated red hot. When ready these were spread out on the ground,

and a thick coating of leaves strewn over them to slack the heat. On this "lovo," or oven, the bodies were then placed, covered over, and left to bake.

The crowd now ran with terrible yells towards a neighbouring hill or mound, on which we observed the frame-work of a house lying ready to be erected. Sick with horror, yet fascinated by curiosity, we staggered after them mechanically, scarce knowing where we were going or what we did, and feeling a sort of impression that all we saw was a dreadful dream.

Arrived at the place, we saw the multitude crowding round a certain spot. We pressed forward and obtained a sight of what they were doing. A large wooden beam or post lay on the ground, beside the other parts of the frame-work of the house, and close to the end of it was a hole about seven feet deep and upwards of two feet wide. While we looked, the man whom we had before observed with his hands pinioned was carried into the circle. His hands were now free, but his legs were tightly strapped together. The post of the house was then placed in the hole, and the man put in beside it. His head was a good way below the surface of the hole, and his arms were clasped round the post. Earth was now thrown in until all was covered over and stamped down; and this, we were afterwards told, was a ceremony usually performed at the dedication of a new temple or the erection of a chief's house!

"Come, come," cried Jack, on beholding this horrible tragedy; "we have seen enough, enough—far more than enough! Let us go."

Jack's face looked ghastly pale and haggard as we hurried back to rejoin the teacher, and I have no doubt that he felt terrible anxiety when he considered the number and ferocity of the savages, and the weakness of the few arms which were ready indeed to essay, but impotent to effect Avatea's deliverance from these ruthless men.

CHAPTER XXXII.

*An unexpected discovery, and a bold, reckless defiance, with its consequences—
Plans of escape, and heroic resolves.*

WHEN we returned to the shore and related to our friend what had passed, he was greatly distressed, and groaned in spirit; but we had not sat long in conversation, when we were interrupted by the arrival of Tararo on the beach, accompanied by a number of followers bearing baskets of vegetables and fruits on their heads.

We advanced to meet him, and he expressed, through our interpreter, much pleasure in seeing us.

"And what is it that my friends wish to say to me?" he inquired.

The teacher explained that we came to beg that Avatea might be spared.

"Tell him," said Jack, "that I consider that I have a right to ask this of him, having not only saved the girl's life, but the lives of his own people also; and say that I wish her to be allowed to follow her own wishes, and join the Christians."

While this was being translated, the chief's brow lowered, and we could see plainly that our request met with no favourable reception. He replied with considerable energy, and at some length.

"What says he?" inquired Jack.

"I regret to say that he will not listen to the proposal. He says he has pledged his word to his friend that the girl shall be sent to him, and a deputy is even now on this island awaiting the fulfilment of the pledge."

Jack bit his lip in suppressed anger. "Tell Tararo," he exclaimed, with flashing eye, "that if he does not grant my demand it will be worse for him. Say I have a big gun on board my schooner that will blow his village into the sea, if he does not give up the girl."

"Nay, my friend," said the teacher gently, "I will not tell him that; we must 'overcome evil with good.'"

"What does my friend say?" inquired the chief, who seemed nettled by Jack's looks of defiance.

"He is displeased," replied the teacher.

Tararo turned away with a smile of contempt, and walked towards the men who carried the baskets of vegetables, and who had now emptied the whole on the beach in an enormous pile.

"What are they doing there?" I inquired.

"I think that they are laying out a gift which they intend to present to some one," said the teacher.

At this moment a couple of men appeared leading a young girl between them, and going towards the heap of fruits and vegetables, placed her on the top of it. We started with surprise and fear, for in that young female before us we recognised the Samoan girl Avatea.

We stood rooted to the earth with surprise and thick-coming fears.

"O my dear young friend," whispered the teacher, in a voice of deep emotion, while he seized Jack by the arm, "she is to be made a sacrifice even now!"

"Is she?" cried Jack, with a vehement shout, spurning the teacher aside, and dashing over two natives who stood in his way, while he rushed towards the heap, sprang up its side, and seized Avatea by the arm. In another moment he dragged her down, placed her back to a large tree, and wrenching a war-club from the hand of a native who seemed powerless and petrified with surprise, whirled it above his head, and yelled, rather than shouted, while his face blazed with fury, "Come on, the whole nation of you, an ye like it, and do your worst!"

It seemed as though the challenge had been literally accepted; for every savage on the ground ran precipitately at Jack with club and spear, and doubtless would speedily have poured out his brave blood on the sod, had not the teacher rushed in between them, and, raising his voice to his utmost, cried,—

"Stay your hands, warriors! It is not your part to judge in this matter. It is for Tararo, the chief, to say whether or not the young man shall live or die.

The natives were arrested; and I know not whether it was the gratifying acknowledgment of his superiority thus made by the teacher, or some lingering feeling of gratitude for Jack's former aid in time of need, that influenced Tararo, but he stepped forward, and waving his hand, said to his people, "Desist. The young man's life is mine." Then turning to Jack, he said, "You have forfeited your liberty and life to me. Submit yourself, for we are more numerous than the sand upon the shore. You are but one; why should you die?"

'Villain!' exclaimed Jack passionately, "I may die, but assuredly

I shall not perish alone. I will not submit until you promise that this girl shall not be injured."

"You are very bold," replied the chief haughtily, "but very foolish. Yet I will say that Avatea shall not be sent away, at least for three days."

"You had better accept these terms," whispered the teacher entreatingly. "If you persist in this mad defiance, you will be slain, and Avatea will be lost. Three days are worth having."

Jack hesitated a moment, then lowered his club, and throwing it moodily to the ground, crossed his arms on his breast and hung down his head in silence.

Tararo seemed pleased by his submission, and told the teacher to say that he did not forget his former services, and therefore would leave him free as to his person, but that the schooner would be detained till he had further considered the matter.

While the teacher translated this, he approached as near to where Avatea was standing as possible, without creating suspicion, and whispered to her a few words in the native language. Avatea, who during the whole of the foregoing scene had stood leaning against the tree perfectly passive, and seemingly quite uninterested with all that was going on, replied by a single rapid glance of her dark eye, which was instantly cast down again on the ground at her feet.

Tararo now advanced, and taking the girl by the hand, led her unresistingly away; while Jack, Peterkin, and I returned with the teacher on board the schooner.

On reaching the deck, we went down to the cabin, where Jack threw himself, in a state of great dejection, on a couch; but the teacher seated himself by his side, and laying his hand upon his shoulder, said,—

"Do not give way to anger, my young friend. God has given us three days, and we must use the means that are in our power to free this poor girl from slavery. We must not sit in idle disappointment, we must act—"

"Act!" cried Jack, raising himself and tossing back his hair wildly; "it is mockery to talk of acting when one is bound hand and feet. How can I act? I cannot fight a whole nation of savages single-handed. Yes," he said, with a bitter smile, "I *can* fight them, but I cannot conquer them to save Avatea."

"Patience, my friend; your spirit is not a good one just now. You cannot expect that blessing which alone can insure success unless you are more submissive. I will tell you ~~my~~ plans if you will listen."

"Listen!" cried Jack eagerly: "of course I will, my good fellow; I did not know you had any plans. Out with them. I only hope you will show me how I can get the girl on board of this schooner, and I'll up anchor and away in no time. But proceed with your plans."

The teacher smiled sadly. "Ah, my friend! if one fathom of your anchor chain were to rattle as you drew it in, a thousand warriors would be standing on your deck. No, no, that could not be done. Even now your ship would be taken from you were it not that Tararo had some feeling of gratitude towards you. But I know Tararo well. He is a man of falsehood, as all the unconverted savages are. The chief to whom he has promised this girl is very powerful, and Tararo *must* fulfil his promise. He has told you that he would do nothing to

the girl for three days ; but that is because the party who are to take her away will not be ready to start for three days. Still, as he might have made you a prisoner during those three days, I say that God has given them to us."

"Well, but what do you propose to do?" said Jack impatiently.

"My plan involves much danger, but I see no other, and I think you have courage to brave it. It is this. There is an island about fifty miles to the south of this, the natives of which are Christians, and have been so for two years and more, and the principal chief is Avatea's lover. Once there, Avatea would be safe. Now, I suggest that you should abandon your schooner. Do you think that you can make so great a sacrifice?"

"Friend," replied Jack, "when I make up my mind to go through with a thing of importance, I can make any sacrifice."

The teacher smiled. "Well, then, the savages could not conceive it possible that for the sake of a girl you would voluntarily lose your fine vessel ; therefore as long as she lies here they think they have you all safe : so I suggest that we get a quantity of stores conveyed to a sequestered part of the shore, provide a small canoe, put Avatea on board, and you three would paddle to the Christian island."

"Bravo !" cried Peterkin, springing up and seizing the teacher's hand. "Missionary, you're a regular brick. I didn't think you had so much in you."

"As for me," continued the teacher, "I will remain on board till they discover that you are gone. Then they will ask me where you are gone to, and I will refuse to tell."

"And what'll be the result of that?" inquired Jack.

"I know not. Perhaps they will kill me ; but," he added, looking at Jack with a peculiar smile, "I, too, am not afraid to die in a good cause !"

"But how are we to get hold of Avatea?" inquired Jack.

"I have arranged with her to meet us at a particular spot, to which I will guide you to-night. We shall then arrange about it. She will easily manage to elude her keepers who are not very strict in watching her, thinking it impossible that she could escape from the island. Indeed, I am sure that such an idea will never enter their heads. But, as I have said, you run great danger. Fifty miles in a small canoe, on the open sea, is a great voyage to make. You may miss the island, too, in which case there is no other in that direction for a hundred miles or more ; and if you lose your way and fall among other heathens, you know the law of Feejee—a castaway who gains the shore is doomed to die. You must count the cost, my young friend."

"I have counted it," replied Jack. "If Avatea consents to run the risk, most certainly I will ; and so will my comrades also. Besides," added Jack, looking seriously into the teacher's face, "your Bible—our Bible—tells of ONE who delivers those who call on Him in the time of trouble ; who holds the winds in His fists, and the waters in the hollow of His hand."

We now set about active preparations for the intended voyage ; collected together such things as we should require, and laid out on the deck provisions sufficient to maintain us for several weeks, purposing to load the canoe with as much as she could hold consistently with speed and safety. These we covered with a tarpaulin, intending

to convey them to the canoe only a few hours before starting. When night spread her sable curtain over the scene, we prepared to land; but first kneeling along with the natives and the teacher, the latter implored a blessing on our enterprise. Then we rowed quietly to the shore and followed our sable guide, who led us by a long detour, in order to avoid the village, to the place of rendezvous. We had not stood more than five minutes under the gloomy shade of the thick foliage when a dark figure glided noiselessly up to us.

"Ah! here you are," said Jack, as Avatea approached,— "Now, then, tell her what we've come about, and don't waste time."

"I understand English," said Avatea, in a low voice.

"Why, where did you pick up English?" exclaimed Jack, in amazement; "you were as dumb as a stone when I saw you last."

"She has learned all she knows of it from me," said the teacher, "since she came to the island."

We now gave Avatea, a full explanation of our plans, entering into all the details, and concealing none of the danger, so that she might be fully aware of the risk she ran. As we had anticipated, she was too glad of the opportunity thus afforded her to escape from her persecutors to think of the danger or risk.

"Then you're willing to go with us, are you?" said Jack.

"Yis, I willing to go."

"And you're not afraid to trust yourself out on the deep sea so far?"

"No, I not 'fraid to go. Safe with Christian."

After some further consultation the teacher suggested that it was time to return, so we bade Avatea good-night, and having appointed to meet at the cliff where the canoe lay on the following night, just after dark, we hastened away—we to row on board the schooner with muffled oars, Avatea to glide back to her prison-hut among the Mango savages.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The flight—The pursuit—Despair and its results—The lion bearded in his den again—Awful danger threatened and wonderfully averted—A terrific storm.

As the time for our meditated flight drew near, we became naturally very fearful lest our purpose should be discovered, and we spent the whole of the following day in a state of nervous anxiety. We resolved to go ashore and ramble about the village, as if to observe the habits and dwellings of the people, as we thought that an air of affected indifference to the events of the previous day would be more likely than any other course of conduct to avert suspicion as to our intentions. While we were thus occupied the teacher remained on board with the Christian natives, whose powerful voices reached us ever and anon as they engaged in singing hymns or in prayer.

At last the long and tedious day came to a close, the sun sank into the sea, and the short-lived twilight of those regions, to which I have already referred, ended abruptly in a dark night. Hastily throwing a few blankets into our little boat, we stepped into it, and whispering farewell to the natives in the schooner, rowed gently over the lagoon, taking care to keep as near to the beach as possible. We rowed in the utmost silence and with muffled oars, so that had any one observed us at the distance of a few yards, he might have almost taken us for a phantom-boat or a shadow on the dark water. Not a breath

of air was stirring ; but fortunately the gentle ripple of the sea upon the shore, mingled with the soft roar of the breaker on the distant reef, effectually drowned the slight plash that we unavoidably made in the water by the dipping of our oars.

Quarter of an hour sufficed to bring us to the overhanging cliff under whose black shadow our little canoe lay, with her bow in the water ready to be launched, and most of her cargo already stowed away. As the keel of our little boat grated on the sand, a hand was laid upon the bow, and a dim form was seen.

"Ha!" said Peterkin in a whisper, as he stepped upon the beach, "is that you, Avatea?"

"Yis, it am me," was the reply.

"All right! Now, then, gently. Help me to shove off the canoe," whispered Jack to the teacher; "and, Peterkin, do you shove these blankets aboard—we may want them before long. Avatea, step into the middle;—that's right."

"Is all ready?" whispered the teacher.

"Not quite," replied Peterkin.—"Here, Ralph, lay hold o' this pair of oars, and stow them away if you can. I don't like paddles. After we're safe away I'll try to rig up rollicks for them."

"Now, then, in with you and shove off."

One more earnest squeeze of the kind teacher's hand, and with his whispered blessing yet sounding in our ears, we shot like an arrow from the shore, sped over the still waters of the lagoon, and paddled as swiftly as strong arms and willing hearts could urge us over the long swell of the open sea.

All that night and the whole of the following day we plied our paddles in almost total silence and without halt, save twice to recruit our failing energies with a mouthful of food and a draught of water. Jack had taken the bearing of the island just after starting, and laying a small pocket-compass before him, kept the head of the canoe due south, for our chance of hitting the island depended very much on the faithfulness of our steersman in keeping our tiny bark exactly and constantly on its proper course. Peterkin and I paddled in the bow, and Avatea worked untiringly in the middle.

As the sun's lower limb dipped on the gilded edge of the sea Jack ceased working, threw down his paddle, and called a halt.

"There!" he cried, heaving a deep, long-drawn sigh, "we've put a considerable breadth of water between us and these black rascals, so now we'll have a hearty supper and a sound sleep."

"Hear, hear!" cried Peterkin. "Nobly spoken, Jack.—Hand me a drop water, Ralph.—Why, girl, what's wrong with you? you look just like a black owl blinking in the sunshine."

Avatea smiled. "I sleepy," she said; and as if to prove the truth of this, she laid her head on the edge of the canoe and fell fast asleep.

"That's uncommon sharp practice," said Peterkin, with a broad grin. "Don't you think we should awake her to make her eat something first? or perhaps," he added, with a grave, meditative look,— "perhaps we might put some food in her mouth, which is so elegantly open at the present moment, and see if she'd swallow it while asleep. If so, Ralph, you might come round to the front here and feed her quietly, while Jack and I are tucking into the victuals. It would be a monstrous economy of time."

I could not help smiling at Peterkin's idea, which indeed, when I

pondered it, seemed remarkably good in theory ; nevertheless, I declined to put it in practice, being fearful of the result should the virtual chance to go down the wrong throat. But on suggesting this to Peterkin, he exclaimed,—

“Down the wrong throat, man ! why, a fellow with half an eye might see that if it went down Avatea’s throat it could not go down the wrong throat !—unless, indeed, you have all of a sudden become inordinately selfish, and think that all the throats in the world are wrong ones except your own. However, don’t talk so much, and hand me the pork before Jack finishes it. I feel myself entitled to at least one minute morsel.

“Peterkin, you’re a villain—a paltry little villain,” said Jack quietly, as he tossed the hind legs (including the tail) of a cold roast pig to his comrade ; “and I must again express my regret that unavoidable circumstances have thrust your society upon me, and that necessity has compelled me to cultivate your acquaintance. Were it not that you are incapable of walking upon the water, I would order you, sir, out of the canoe.”

“There ! you’ve wakened Avatea with your long tongue,” retorted Peterkin, with a frown, as the girl gave vent to a deep sigh. “No,” he continued, “it was only a snore. Perchance she dreameth of her black Apollo.—I say, Ralph, do leave just one little slice of that yam. Between you and Jack I run a chance of being put on short allowance, if not—yei—a—a—ow !”

Peterkin’s concluding remark was a yawn of so great energy that Jack recommended him to postpone the conclusion of his meal till next morning—a piece of advice which he followed so quickly that I was forcibly reminded of his remark, a few minutes before, in regard to the sharp practice of Avatea.

My readers will have observed, probably, by this time that I am much given to meditation ; they will not, therefore, be surprised to learn that I fell into a deep reverie on the subject of sleep, which was continued without intermission into the night, and prolonged without interruption into the following morning. But I cannot feel assured that I actually slept during that time, although I am tolerably certain that I was not awake.

Thus we lay like a shadow on the still bosom of the ocean, while the night closed in, and all around was calm, dark, and silent.

A thrilling cry of alarm from Peterkin startled us in the morning, just as the grey dawn began to glimmer in the east.

“What’s wrong ?” cried Jack, starting up.

Peterkin replied by pointing with a look of anxious dread towards the horizon ; and a glance sufficed to show us that one of the largest sized war-canoes was approaching us !

With a groan of mingled despair and anger Jack seized his paddle, glanced at the compass, and in a suppressed voice commanded us to “give way.” But we did not require to be urged. Already our four paddles were glancing in the water, and the canoe bounded over the glassy sea like a dolphin, while a shout from our pursuers told that they had observed our motions.

“I see something like land ahead,” said Jack, in a hopeful tone. “It seems impossible that we could have made the island yet ; still, if it is so, we may reach it before these fellows can catch us, for our canoe is light and our muscles are fresh.”

No one replied ; for, to say truth, we felt that in a long chase we had no chance whatever with a canoe which held nearly a hundred warriors. Nevertheless, we resolved to do our utmost to escape, and paddled with a degree of vigour that kept us well in advance of our pursuers. The war-canoe was so far behind us that it seemed but a little speck on the sea, and the shouts, to which the crew occasionally gave vent, came faintly towards us on the morning breeze. We therefore hoped that we should be able to keep in advance for an hour or two, when we might perhaps reach the land ahead. But this hope was suddenly crushed by the supposed land not long after rising up into the sky, thus proving itself to be a fog-bank !

A bitter feeling of disappointment filled each heart, and was expressed on each countenance, as we beheld this termination to our hopes. But we had little time to think of regret. Our danger was too great and imminent to permit of a moment's relaxation from our exertions. No hope now animated our bosoms ; but a feeling of despair, strange to say, lent us power to work, and nerved our arms with such energy that it was several hours ere the savages overtook us. When we saw that there was indeed no chance of escape, and that paddling any longer would only serve to exhaust our strength, without doing any good, we turned the side of our canoe towards the approaching enemy, and laid down our paddles.

Silently, and with a look of bitter determination on his face, Jack lifted one of the light boat-oars that we had brought with us, and resting it on his shoulder, stood up in an attitude of bold defiance. Peterkin took the other oar and also stood up, but there was no anger visible on his countenance. When not sparkling with fun, it usually wore a mild, sad expression, which was deepened on the present occasion, as he glanced at Avatea, who sat with her face resting in her hands upon her knees. Without knowing very well what I intended to do, I also rose and grasped my paddle with both hands.

On came the large canoe like a war-horse of the deep, with the foam curling from its sharp bow, and the spear-heads of the savages glancing in the beams of the rising sun. Perfect silence was maintained on both sides, and we could hear the hissing water, and see the frowning eyes of the warriors, as they came rushing on. When about twenty yards distant, five or six of the savages in the bow rose, and, laying aside their paddles, took up their spears. Jack and Peterkin raised their oars, while, with a feeling of madness whirling in my brain, I grasped my paddle and prepared for the onset. But before any of us could strike a blow, the sharp prow of the war-canoe struck us like a thunderbolt on the side, and hurled us into the sea !

What occurred after this I cannot tell, for I was nearly drowned ; but when I recovered from the state of insensibility into which I had been thrown, I found myself stretched on my back, bound hand and foot between Jack and Peterkin, in the bottom of the large canoe.

In this condition we lay the whole day, during which time the savages only rested one hour. When night came, they rested again for another hour, and appeared to sleep just as they sat. But we were neither unbound nor allowed to speak to each other during the voyage, nor was a morsel of food or a draught of water given to us. For food, however, we cared little ; but we would have given much for a drop of water to cool our parched lips, and we would have been glad, too, had they loosened the cords that bound us, for they were

tightly fastened and occasioned us much pain. The air, also, was unusually hot, so much so that I felt convinced that a storm was brewing. This also added to our sufferings. However, these were at length relieved by our arrival at the island from which we had fled.

While we were being led ashore, we caught a glimpse of Avatea, who was seated in the hinder part of the canoe. She was not fettered in any way. Our captors now drove us before them towards the hut of Tararo, at which we speedily arrived, and found the chief seated with an expression on his face that boded us no good. Our friend the teacher stood beside him, with a look of anxiety on his mild features.

"How comes it," said Tararo, turning to the teacher, "that these youths have abused our hospitality?"

"Tell him," replied Jack, "that we have not abused his hospitality, for his hospitality has not been extended to us. I came to the island to deliver Avatea, and my only regret is that I have failed to do so. If I get another chance, I will save her yet."

The teacher shook his head. "Nay, my young friend, I had better not tell him that; it will only incense him."

"I care not," replied Jack. "If you don't tell him that, you'll tell him nothing, for I won't say anything softer."

On hearing Jack's speech, Tararo frowned and his eyes flashed with anger.

"Go," he cried, "presumptuous boy. My debt to you is cancelled. You and your companions shall die."

As he spoke he rose and signed to several of his attendants, who seized Jack and Peterkin and me violently by the collars, and dragging us from the hut of the chief, led us through the wood to the outskirts of the village. Here they thrust us into a species of natural cave in a cliff, and having barricaded the entrance, left us in total darkness.

After feeling about for some time—for our legs were unshackled, although our wrists were still bound with thongs—we found a low ledge of rock running along one side of the cavern. On this we seated ourselves, and a long time maintained unbroken silence.

At last I could restrain my feelings no longer. "Alas! dear Jack and Peterkin," said I, "what is to become of us? I fear that we are doomed to die."

"I know not," cried Jack, in a tremulous voice, "I know not. Ralph, I regret deeply the hastiness of my violent temper, which, I must confess, has been the chief cause of our being brought to this sad condition. Perhaps the teacher may do something for us. But I have little hope."

"Ah no!" said Peterkin, with a heavy sigh; "I am sure he can't help us. Tararo doesn't care more for him than for one of his dogs."

"Truly," said I, "there seems no chance of deliverance, unless the Almighty puts forth His arm to save us. Yet I must say that I have great hope, my comrades; for we have come to this dark place by no fault of ours—unless it be a fault to succour a woman in distress."

I was interrupted in my remarks by a noise at the entrance to the cavern, which was caused by the removal of the barricade. Immediately after, three men entered, and taking us by the collars of

our coats, led us away through the forest. As we advanced, we heard much shouting and beating of native drums in the village, and at first we thought that our guards were conducting us to the hut of Tararo again. But in this we were mistaken. The beating of the drums gradually increased, and soon after we observed a procession of the natives coming towards us. At the head of this procession we were placed, and then we all advanced together towards the temple where human victims are wont to be sacrificed !

A thrill of horror ran through my heart as I recalled to mind the awful scenes that I had before witnessed at that dreadful spot. But deliverance came suddenly from a quarter whence we little expected it. During the whole of that day there had been an unusual degree of heat in the atmosphere, and the sky assumed that lurid aspect which portends a thunderstorm. Just as we were approaching the horrid temple, a growl of thunder burst overhead and heavy drops of rain began to fall.

Those who have not witnessed gales and storms in tropical regions can form but a faint conception of the fearful hurricane that burst upon the island of Mango at this time. Before we reached the temple, the storm burst upon us with a deafening roar, and the natives, who knew too well the devastation that was to follow, fled right and left through the woods in order to save their property, leaving us alone in the midst of the howling storm. The trees around us bent before the blast like willows, and we were about to flee in order to seek shelter, when the teacher ran towards us with a knife in his hand.

"Thank the Lord," he said, cutting our bonds, "I am in time ! Now, seek the shelter of the nearest rock."

This we did without a moment's hesitation, for the whistling wind burst, ever and anon, like thunder-claps among the trees, and tearing them from their roots, hurled them with violence to the ground. Rain cut across the land in sheets, and lightning played like forked serpents in the air, while high above the hissing tempest the thunder crashed and burst and rolled in awful majesty.

In the village the scene was absolutely appalling. Roofs were blown completely off the houses in many cases ; and in others the houses themselves were levelled with the ground. In the midst of this the natives were darting to and fro, in some instances saving their goods, but in many others seeking to save themselves from the storm of destruction that whirled around them. But terrific although the tempest was on land, it was still more tremendous on the mighty ocean. Billows sprang, as it were, from the great deep, and while their crests were absolutely scattered into white mist, they fell upon the beach with a crash that seemed to shake the solid land. But they did not end there. Each successive wave swept higher and higher on the beach, until the ocean lashed its angry waters among the trees and bushes, and at length, in a sheet of white curdled foam, swept into the village and upset and carried off, or dashed into wreck, whole rows of the native dwellings ! It was a sublime, an awful scene, calculated, in some degree at least, to impress the mind of beholders with the might and the majesty of God.

We found shelter in a cave that night and all the next day, during which time the storm raged in fury ; but on the night following it abated somewhat, and in the morning we went to the village to seek

for food, being so famished with hunger that we lost all feeling of danger and all wish to escape in our desire to satisfy the cravings of nature. But no sooner had we obtained food than we began to wish we had rather endeavoured to make our escape into the mountains. This we attempted to do soon afterwards ; but the natives were now able to look after us, and on our showing a disposition to avoid observation and make towards the mountains, we were seized by three warriors, who once more bound our wrists and thrust us into our former prison.

It is true Jack made a vigorous resistance, and knocked down the first savage who seized him with a well-directed blow of his fist, but he was speedily overpowered by others. Then we were again prisoners with the prospect of torture and a violent death before us.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Imprisonment—Sinking hopes—Unexpected freedom to more than one, and in more senses than one.

FOR a long, long month we remained in our dark and dreary prison, during which dismal time we did not see the face of a human being, except that of the silent savage who brought us our daily food.

There has been one or two seasons in my life during which I have felt as if the darkness of sorrow and desolation that crushed my inmost heart could never pass away until death should make me cease to feel. The present was such a season.

During the first part of our confinement we felt a cold chill at our hearts every time we heard a footfall near the cave—dreading lest it should prove to be that of our executioner. But as time dragged heavily on we ceased to feel this alarm, and began to experience such a deep, irrepressible longing for freedom, that we chafed and fretted in our confinement like tigers. Then a feeling of despair came over us, and we actually longed for the time when the savages would take us forth to die ! But these changes took place very gradually, and were mingled sometimes with brighter thoughts ; for there were times when we sat in that dark cavern on our ledge of rock and conversed almost pleasantly about the past, until we well-nigh forgot the dreary present. But we seldom ventured to touch upon the future.

A few decayed leaves and boughs formed our bed, and a scanty supply of yams and taro, brought to us once a-day, constituted our food.

"Well, Ralph, how have you slept?" said Jack, in a listless tone, on rising one morning from his humble couch. "Were you much disturbed by the wind last night?"

"No," said I : "I dreamed of home all night, and I thought that my mother smiled upon me, and beckoned me to go to her ; but I could not, for I was chained."

"And I dreamed, too," said Peterkin ; "but it was of our happy home on the Coral Island. I thought we were swimming in the Water Garden ; then the savages gave a yell, and we were immediately in the cave at Spouting Cliff, which, somehow or other, changed into this gloomy cavern ; and I awoke to find it true."

Peterkin's tone was so much altered by the depressing influence of

his long imprisonment, that, had I not known it was he who spoke, I could scarcely have recognized it, so sad was it, and so unlike to the merry, cheerful voice we had been accustomed to hear. I pondered this much, and thought of the terrible decline of happiness that may come on human beings in so short a time ; how bright the sunshine in the sky at one time, and in a short space how dark the overshadowing cloud ! I had no doubt that the Bible would have given me much light and comfort on this subject, if I had possessed one, and I once more had occasion to regret deeply having neglected to store my memory with its consoling truths.

While I meditated thus, Peterkin again broke the silence of the cave, by saying, in a melancholy tone—"Oh, I wonder if we shall ever see our dear island more !"

His voice trembled, and covering his face with both hands, he bent down his head and wept. It was an unusual sight for me to see our once joyous companion in tears, and I felt a burning desire to comfort him ; but, alas ! what could I say ? I could hold out no hope ; and although I essayed twice to speak, the words refused to pass my lips. While I hesitated, Jack sat down beside him, and whispered a few words in his ear ; while Peterkin threw himself on his friend's breast, and rested his head on his shoulder.

Thus we sat for some time in deep silence. Soon after, we heard footsteps at the entrance of the cave, and immediately our jailer entered. We were so much accustomed to his regular visits, however, that we paid little attention to him, expecting that he would set down our meagre fare, as usual, and depart. But to our surprise, instead of doing so, he advanced towards us with a knife in his hand, and going up to Jack, he cut the thongs that bound his wrists, then he did the same to Peterkin and me ! For fully five minutes we stood in speechless amazement, with our freed hands hanging idly by our sides. The first thought that rushed into my mind was, that the time had come to put us to death ; and although, as I have said before, we actually wished for death in the strength of our despair, now that we thought it drew really near, I felt all the natural love of life revive in my heart, mingled with a chill of horror at the suddenness of our call.

But I was mistaken. After cutting our bonds, the savage pointed to the cave's mouth, and we marched, almost mechanically, into the open air. Here, to our surprise, we found the teacher, standing under a tree, with his hands clasped before him, and the tears trickling down his dark cheeks. On seeing Jack, who came out first, he sprang towards him, and clasping him in his arms, exclaimed,—

"O my dear young friend, through the great goodness of God you are free !"

"Free !" cried Jack.

"Ay, free," repeated the teacher, shaking us warmly by the hands again and again—"free to go and come as you will. The Lord has unloosed the bands of the captive and set the prisoners free. A missionary has been sent to us, and Tararo has embraced the Christian religion ! The people are even now burning their gods of wood ! Come, my dear friends, and see the glorious sight."

We could scarcely credit our senses. So long had we been accustomed in our cavern to dream of deliverance, that we imagined for

a moment this must surely be nothing more than another vivid dream. Our eyes and minds were dazzled, too, by the brilliant sunshine, which almost blinded us after our long confinement to the gloom of our prison, so that we felt giddy with the variety of conflicting emotions that filled our throbbing bosoms; but as we followed the footsteps of our sable friend, and beheld the bright foliage of the trees, and heard the cries of the paroquets, and smelt the rich perfume of the flowering shrubs, the truth, that we were really delivered from prison and from death, rushed with overwhelming power into our souls, and with one accord, while tears sprang to our eyes, we uttered a loud long cheer of joy.

It was replied to by a shout from a number of the natives who chanced to be near. Running towards us, they shook us by the hand with every demonstration of kindly feeling. They then fell behind, and forming a sort of procession, conducted us to the dwelling of Tararo.

The scene that met our eyes here was one that I shall never forget. On a rude bench in front of his house sat the chief. A native stood on his left hand who from his dress seemed to be a teacher. On his right stood an English gentleman, who I at once and rightly concluded was a missionary. He was tall, thin, and apparently past forty, with a bald forehead and thin gray hair. The expression of his countenance was the most winning I ever saw, and his clear gray eye beamed with a look that was frank, fearless, loving, and truthful. In front of the chief was an open space, in the centre of which lay a pile of wooden idols, ready to be set on fire; and around these were assembled thousands of natives, who had come to join in or to witness the unusual sight. A bright smile overspread the missionary's face as he advanced quickly to meet us, and he shook us warmly by the hands.

"I am overjoyed to meet you, my dear young friends," he said. "My friend and *your* friend, the teacher, has told me your history; and I thank our Father in heaven, with all my heart, that He has guided me to this island, and made me the instrument of saving you."

We thanked the missionary most heartily, and asked him in some surprise how he had succeeded in turning the heart of Tararo in our favour.

"I will tell you that at a more convenient time," he answered; "meanwhile we must not forget the respect due to the chief. He waits to receive you."

In the conversation that followed between us and Tararo, the latter said that the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ had been sent to the island, and that to it we were indebted for our freedom. Moreover, he told us that we were at liberty to depart in our schooner whenever we pleased, and that we should be supplied with as much provision as we required. He concluded by shaking hands with us warmly, and performing the ceremony of rubbing noses.

This was indeed good news to us, and we could hardly find words to express our gratitude to the chief and to the missionary.

"And what of Avatea?" inquired Jack.

The missionary replied by pointing to a group of natives in the midst of whom the girl stood. Beside her was a tall, strapping fellow, whose noble mien and air of superiority bespoke him a chief of no ordinary kind.

"That youth is her lover. He came this very morning in his war-canoe to treat with Tararo for Avatea. He is to be married in a few days, and afterwards returns to his island home with his bride!"

"That's capital," said Jack, as he stepped up to the savage and gave him a hearty shake of the hand. "I wish you joy, my lad; and you too, Avatea."

As Jack spoke, Avatea's lover took him by the hand and led him to the spot where Tararo and the missionary stood, surrounded by most of the chief men of the tribe. The girl herself followed, and stood on his left hand while her lover stood on his right, and, commanding silence, made the following speech, which was translated by the missionary:—

"Young friend, you have seen few years, but your head is old. Your heart also is large and very brave. I and Avatea are your debtors, and we wish, in the midst of this assembly, to acknowledge our debt, and to say that it is one which we can never repay. You have risked your life for one who was known to you only for a few days. But she was a woman in distress, and that was enough to secure to her the aid of a Christian man. We, who live in these islands of the sea know that the true Christians always act thus. Their religion is one of love and kindness. We thank God that so many Christians have been sent here; we hope many more will come. Remember that I and Avatea will think of you and pray for you and your brave comrades when you are far away."

To this kind speech Jack returned a short, sailor-like reply, in which he insisted that he had only done for Avatea what he would have done for any woman under the sun. But Jack's forte did not lie in speech-making, so he terminated rather abruptly by seizing the chief's hand and shaking it violently, after which he made a hasty retreat.

"Now, then, Ralph and Peterkin," said Jack, as we mingled with the crowd, "it seems to me that the object we came here for having been satisfactorily accomplished, we have nothing more to do but get ready for sea as fast as we can, and hurrah for dear old England!"

"That's my idea precisely," said Peterkin, endeavouring to wink; but he had wept so much of late, poor fellow, that he found it difficult. "However, I'm not going away till I see these fellows burn their gods."

Peterkin had his wish, for in a few minutes afterwards fire was put to the pile, the roaring flames ascended, and amid the acclamations of the assembled thousands the false gods of Mango were reduced to ashes!

CHAPTER XXXV.

Conclusion.

To part is the lot of all mankind. The world is a scene of constant leave-taking, and the hands that grasp in cordial greeting to-day are doomed ere long to unite for the last time, when the quivering lips pronounce the word—"Farewell." It is a sad thought, but should we on that account exclude it from our minds? May not a lesson worth learning be gathered in the contemplation of it? May it not, perchance, teach us to devote our thoughts more frequently and attentively to that land where we meet but part no more?

How many do we part from in this world with a light good-bye whom we never see again ! Often do I think, in my meditations on this subject, that if we realized more fully the shortness of the fleeting intercourse that we have in this world with many of our fellow-men, we would try more earnestly to do them good, to give them a friendly smile, as it were, in passing (for the longest intercourse on earth is little more than a passing word and glance), and show that we have sympathy with them in the short, quick struggle of life, by our kindly words and looks and actions.

The time soon drew near when we were to quit the islands of the South Seas ; and strange though it may appear, we felt deep regret at parting with the natives of the island of Mango : for after they embraced the Christian faith, they sought, by showing us the utmost kindness, to compensate for the harsh treatment we had experienced at their hands ; and we felt a growing affection for the native teachers and the missionary, and especially for Avatea and her husband.

Before leaving we had many long and interesting conversations with the missionary, in one of which he told us that he had been making for the island of Rarotonga, when his native-built sloop was blown out of its course, during a violent gale, and driven to this island. At first the natives refused to listen to what he had to say ; but after a week's residence among them, Tararo came to him and said that he wished to become a Christian, and would burn his idols. He proved himself to be sincere, for, as we have seen, he persuaded all his people to do likewise. I use the word "persuaded" advisedly ; for, like all the other Feejee chiefs, Tararo was a despot, and might have commanded obedience to his wishes ; but he entered so readily into the spirit of the new faith, that he perceived at once the impropriety of using constraint in the propagation of it. He set the example, therefore ; and that example was followed by almost every man of the tribe.

During the short time that we remained at the island, repairing our vessel and getting her ready for sea, the natives had commenced building a large and commodious church, under the superintendence of the missionary, and several rows of new cottages were marked out ; so that the place bid fair to become, in a few months, as prosperous and beautiful as the Christian village at the other end of the island.

After Avatea was married, she and her husband were sent away loaded with presents, chiefly of an edible nature. One of the native teachers went with them, for the purpose of visiting still more distant islands of the sea, and spreading, if possible, the light of the glorious gospel there.

As the missionary intended to remain for several weeks longer, in order to encourage and confirm his new converts, Jack and Peterkin and I held a consultation in the cabin of our schooner—which we found just as we had left her, for everything that had been taken out of her was restored. We now resolved to delay our departure no longer. The desire to see our beloved native land was strong upon us, and we could not wait.

Three natives volunteered to go with us to Tahiti, where we thought it likely that we should be able to procure a sufficient crew of sailors to man our vessel ; so we accepted their offer gladly.

It was a bright clear morning when we hoisted the snow-white sails

of the pirate schooner and left the shores of Mango. The missionary and thousands of the natives came down to bid us God-speed, and to see us sail away. As the vessel bent before a light fair wind, we glided quickly over the lagoon under a cloud of canvas.

Just as we passed through the channel in the reef the natives gave us a loud cheer ; and as the missionary waved his hat, while he stood on a coral rock with his gray hairs floating in the wind, we heard the single word "Farewell" borne faintly over the sea.

That night, as we sat on the taffrail gazing out upon the wide sea and up into the starry firmament, a thrill of joy, strangely mixed with sadness, passed through our hearts ; for we were at length "homeward bound," and were gradually leaving far behind us the beautiful bright green coral islands of the Pacific Ocean.

MARTIN RATTLER.

A TALE OF THE FORESTS OF BRAZIL.

CHAPTER I.

A hero and his only relative.

MARTIN RATTLER was a very bad boy. At least his aunt, Mrs. Dorothy Grumbit, said so ; and certainly she ought to have known, if anybody should, for Martin lived with her, and was, as she herself expressed it, "the bane of her existence, the very torment of her life." No doubt of it whatever, according to Aunt Dorothy Grumbit's showing, Martin Rattler was "a remarkably bad boy."

It is a curious fact, however, that although most of the people in the village of Ashford seemed to agree with Mrs. Grumbit in her opinion of Martin, there were very few of them who did not smile cheerfully on the child when they met him, and say, "Good-day, lad," as heartily as if they thought him the best boy in the place. No one seemed to bear Martin ill-will, notwithstanding his alleged badness. Men laughed when they said he was a bad boy, as if they did not quite believe their own assertion. The vicar, an old, white-headed man, with a kind, hearty countenance, said that the child was full of mischief—full of mischief ; but he would improve as he grew older, he was quite certain of that. And the vicar was a good judge, for he had five boys of his own, besides three other boys, the sons of a distant relative, who boarded with him ; and he had lived forty years in a parish overflowing with boys, and he was particularly fond of boys in general. Not so the doctor, a pursy little man with a terrific frown, who hated boys, especially little ones, with a very powerful hatred. The doctor said that Martin was a scamp.

And yet Martin had not the appearance of a scamp. He had fat rosy cheeks, a round rosy mouth, a straight, delicately-formed nose,

a firm, massive chin, and a broad forehead. But the latter was seldom visible, owing to the thickly-clustering fair curls that overhung it. When asleep, Martin's face was the perfection of gentle innocence. But the instant he opened his dark-brown eyes, a thousand dimples and wrinkles played over his visage, chiefly at the corners of his mouth and round his eyes, as if the spirit of fun and the spirit of mischief had got entire possession of the boy, and were determined to make the most of him. When deeply interested in anything, Martin was as grave and serious as a philosopher.

Aunt Dorothy Grumbit had a turned-up nose—a very much turned-up nose; so much so, indeed, that it presented a front view of the nostrils! It was an aggravating nose, too, for the old lady's spectacles refused to rest on any part of it except the extreme point. Mrs. Grumbit invariably placed them on the right part of her nose, and they as invariably slid down the curved slope until they were brought up by the little hillock at the end. There they condescended to repose in peace.

Mrs. Grumbit was mild, and gentle, and little, and thin, and old—perhaps seventy-five; but no one knew her age for certain, not even herself. She wore an old-fashioned, high-crowned cap, and a gown of bed-curtain chintz, with flowers on it the size of a saucer. It was a curious gown, and very cheap for Mrs. Grumbit was poor. No one knew the extent of her poverty any more than they did her age; but she herself knew it, and felt it deeply—never so deeply, perhaps, as when her orphan nephew Martin grew old enough to be put to school and she had not wherewithal to send him. But love is quick-witted and resolute. A residence of six years in Germany had taught her to knit stockings at a rate that cannot be described, neither conceived unless seen. She knitted two dozen pairs. The vicar took one dozen the doctor took the other. The fact soon became known. Shops were not numerous in the village in those days, and the wares they supplied were only second-rate. Orders came pouring in; Mrs. Grumbit's knitting-wires clicked, and her little old hands wagged with incomprehensible rapidity and unflagging regularity; and Martin Rattler was sent to school.

While occupied with her knitting she sat in a high-backed chair in a very small deep window, through which the sun streamed nearly the whole day, and out of which there was the most charming imaginable view of the gardens and orchards of the villagers, with a little dancing brook in the midst, and the green fields of the farmers beyond, studded with sheep and cattle and knolls of woodland, and bounded in the far distance by the bright blue sea. It was a lovely scene, such an one as causes the eye to brighten and the heart to melt as we gaze upon it and think, perchance, of its Creator.

"Yes, it was a scene worth looking at; but Mrs. Grumbit never looked at it, for the simple reason that she could not have seen it if she had. Half way across her own little parlour was the extent of her natural vision. By the aid of spectacles and a steady, concentrated effort she could see the fireplace at the other end of the room, and the portrait of her deceased husband, who had been a sea-captain, and the white kitten that usually sat on the rug before the fire. To be sure she saw them very indistinctly. The picture was a hazy blue patch, which was the captain's coat; with a white patch down the middle of it, which was his waiscoat; and a yellow ball on the top of

it, which was his head. It was rather an indistinct and generalized view, no doubt, but she *saw* it, and that was a great comfort.

CHAPTER II.

In disgrace.

FIRE was the cause of Martin's getting into disgrace at school for the first time; and this is how it happened.

"Go and poke the fire, Martin Rattler," said the schoolmaster, "and put on a bit of coal; and see that you don't send the sparks flying about the floor."

Martin sprang with alacrity to obey, for he was standing up with the class at the time, and was glad of the temporary relaxation. He stirred the fire with great care, and put on several pieces of coal very slowly, and rearranged them two or three times, after which he stirred the fire a little more, and examined it carefully to see that it was all right. But he did not seem quite satisfied, and was proceeding to readjust the coals when Bob Croaker, one of the big boys, who was a bullying, ill-tempered fellow, and had a spite against Martin, called out,—

"Please, sir, Rattler's playin' at the fire."

"Come back to your place, sir!" cried the master sternly.

Martin returned in haste, and resumed his position in the class. As he did so he observed that his fore-finger was covered with soot. Immediately a smile of glee overspread his features, and while the master was busy with one of the boys, he drew his black finger gently down the forehead and nose of the boy next to him.

"What part of the earth was peopled by the descendants of Ham?" cried the master, pointing to the dux.

"Shem," shrieked a small boy near the foot of the class.

"Silence!" thundered the master, with a frown that caused the small boy to quake down to the points of his toes.

"Asia," answered dux.

"Next?"

"Turkey."

"Next, next, next? Hallo! John Ward," cried the master, starting up in anger from his seat, "what do you mean by that, sir?"

"What, sir?" said John Ward, tremulously, while a suppressed titter ran round the class.

"Your face, sir! Who blackened your face, eh?"

"I—I—don't know," said the boy drawing his sleeve across his face which had the effect of covering it with sooty streaks.

An uncontrollable shout of laughter burst from the whole school, which was instantly followed by a silence so awful and profound that a pin might have been heard to fall.

"Martin Rattler, you did that! I know you did; I see the marks on your fingers. Come here, sir! Now tell me, *did* you do it?"

Martin Rattler never told falsehoods. His old aunt had laboured to impress upon him from infancy that to lie was to commit a sin which is abhorred by God and scorned by man, and her teaching had not been in vain. The child would have suffered any punishment rather than have told a deliberate lie. He looked straight in the master's face, and said, "Yes, sir, I did it."

"Very well, go to your seat, and remain in school during the play-hour."

With a heavy heart Martin obeyed, and soon after the school was dismissed.

"I say, Rattler," whispered Bob Croaker, as he passed, "I'm going to teach your white kitten to swim just now. Won't you come and see it?"

The malicious laugh with which the boy accompanied this remark convinced Martin that he intended to put his threat in execution. For a moment he thought of rushing out after him to protect his pet kitten; but a glance at the stern brow of the master, as he sat at his desk reading, restrained him, so, crushing down his feelings of mingled fear and anger, he endeavoured to while away the time by watching the boys as they played in the fields before the windows of the school.

CHAPTER III.

The great fight.

"MARTIN!" said the schoolmaster, in a severe tone, looking up from the book with which he was engaged, "don't look out of the window, sir; turn you back to it."

"Please, sir, I can't help it," replied the boy, trembling with eagerness as he stared across the fields.

"Turn your back to it, I say!" reiterated the master in a loud tone, at the same time striking the desk violently with his cane.

"O sir, let me out! There's Bob Croaker with my kitten. He's going to drown it. I know he is—he said he would; and if he does, aunty will die, for she loves it next to me. And I *must* save it; and—and if you *don't* let me out—you'll be a murderer!"

At this concluding burst, Martin sprang forward and stood before his master with clenched fists and a face blazing with excitement. The schoolmaster's gaze of astonishment gradually gave place to a dark frown strangely mingled with a smile, and, when the boy concluded, he said quietly, "You may go."

No second bidding was needed. The door flew open with a bang, and the gravel of the playground, spurned right and left, dashed against the window panes as Martin flew across it. The paling that fenced it off from the fields below was low, but too high for a jump. Never a boy in all the school had crossed that paling at a spring without laying his hands upon it, but Martin did. We do not mean to say that he did anything superhuman; but he rushed at it like a charge cavalry, sprang from the ground like a deer, kicked away the top bar, tumbled completely over, landed on his head, and rolled down the slope on the other side as fast as he could have run down—perhaps faster.

It would have required sharper eyes than yours or mine to have observed how Martin got on his legs again; but he did it in a twinkling, and was half across the field almost before you could wink, and panting on the heels of Bob Croaker. Bob saw him coming, and instantly started off at a hard run, followed by the whole school. A few minutes brought them to the banks of the stream, where Bob

Croaker halted, and turning round, held the white kitten up by the nape of the neck.

"Oh, spare it! spare it, Bob!—don't do it—please don't, don't do it!" gasped Martin, as he strove it vain to run faster.

"There you go!" shouted Bob, with a coarse laugh, sending the kitten high into the air, whence it fell with a loud splash into the water.

It was a dreadful shock to feline nerves, no doubt, but that white kitten was no ordinary animal. Its little heart beat bravely when it rose to the surface, and before its young master came up it had regained the bank. But alas! what a change! It went into the stream a fat, round, comfortable ball of eider-down; it came out—a scraggy blotch of white paint, with its black eyes glaring like two great glass beads! No sooner did it crawl out of the water than Bob Croaker seized it, and whirled it round his head, amid, suppressed cries of "Shame!" intending to throw it in again; but at that instant Martin Rattler seized Bob by the collar of his coat with both hands, and letting himself drop suddenly, dragging the cruel boy to the ground, while the kitten crept humbly away and hid itself in a thick tuft of grass.

A moment sufficed to enable Bob Croaker, who was nearly twice Martin's weight, to free himself from the grasp of his panting antagonist, whom he threw on his back and doubled his fist, intending to strike Martin on the face; but a general rush of boys prevented this.

"Shame, shame! fair play!" cried several; "don't hit him when he's down!"

"Then let him rise up and come on!" cried Bob fiercely, as he sprang up and released Martin.

"Ay, that's fair. Now then, Martin, remember the kitten."

"Strike men of your own size!" cried several of the bigger boys, as they interposed to prevent Martin from rushing into the unequal contest.

"So I will," cried Bob Croaker, glaring round with passion. "Come on, any of you that likes. I don't care a button for the biggest of you."

No one accepted this challenge, for Bob was the oldest and the strongest boy in the school, although, as is usually the case with bullies, by no means the bravest.

Seeing that no one intended to fight with him, and that a crowd of boys strove to hold Martin Rattler back, while they assured him that he had not the smallest chance in the world, Bob turned towards the kitten, which was quietly and busily employed in licking itself dry, and said, "Now, Martin, you coward, I'll give it another swim for your impudence."

"Stop, stop!" cried Martin earnestly. "Bob Croaker, I would rather do anything than fight. I would give you everything I have to save my kitten; but if you won't spare it unless I fight, I'll do it. If you throw it in before you fight me, you're the greatest coward that ever walked. Just give me five minutes to breathe, and a drink of water, and I'll fight you as long as I can stand."

Bob looked at his little foe in surprise. "Well, that's fair. I'm your man; but if you don't lick me, I'll drown the kitten that's all." Having said this, he quietly divested himself of his jacket and neck-cloth, while several boys assisted Martin to do the same, and brought

him a draught of water in the crown of one of their caps. In five minutes all was ready, and the two boys stood face to face and foot to foot, with their fists doubled, and revolving, and a ring of boys around them.

Just at this critical moment the kitten, having found the process of licking itself dry more fatiguing than it had expected, gave vent to a faint mew of distress. It was all that was wanting to set Martin's indignant heart into a blaze of inexpressible fury. Bob Croaker's visage instantly received a shower of sharp, stinging blows, that had the double effect of taking that youth by surprise and throwing him down upon the greensward. But Martin could not hope to do this a second time. Bob now knew the vigour of his assailant, and braced himself warily to the combat, commencing operations by giving Martin a tremendous blow on the point of his nose, and another on the chest. These had the effect of tempering Martin's rage with a salutary degree of caution, and of eliciting from the spectators sundry cries of warning on the one hand, and admiration on the other, while the young champions revolved warily round each other, and panted vehemently.

The battle that was fought that day was one of a thousand. It created as great a sensation in the village school as did the battle of Waterloo in England. It was a notable fight, such as had not taken place within the memory of the oldest boy in the village, and from which, in after years, events of juvenile history were dated—especially pugilistic events, of which, when a good one came off, it used to be said that "such a battle had not taken place since the year of the *Great Fight*." Bob Croaker was a noted fighter. Martin Rattler was, up to this date, an untried hero. Although fond of rough play and boisterous mischief, he had an unconquerable aversion to earnest fighting, and very rarely indeed returned home with a black eye—much to the satisfaction of Aunt Dorothy Grumbit, who objected to all fighting from principle, and frequently asserted, in gentle tones, that there should be no soldiers or sailors, (fighting sailors, she meant) at all, but that people ought all to settle everything the best way they could without fighting, and live peaceably with one another, as the Bible told them to do. They would be far happier and better off, she was sure of that; and if everybody was of her way of thinking, there would be neither swords, nor guns, nor pistols, nor squibs, nor anything else at all! Dear old lady! It would indeed be a blessing if her principles could be carried out in this warring and jarring world. But as this is rather difficult, what we ought to be careful about is, that we never fight except in a good cause and with a clear conscience.

It was well for Martin Rattler, on that great day, that the formation of the ground favoured him. The spot on which the fight took place was uneven, and covered with little hillocks and hollows, over which Bob Croaker stumbled and into which he fell—being a clumsy boy on his legs—and did himself considerable damage; while Martin, who was firmly knit and active as a kitten, scarcely ever fell, or if he did, sprang up again like an indiarubber ball. Fair play was embedded deep in the centre of Martin's heart, so that he scorned to hit his adversary when he was down or in the act of rising; but the thought of the fate that awaited the white kitten if he were conquered acted like lightning in his veins, and scarcely had Bob time to double his

fists after a fall, when he was knocked back again into the hollow out of which he had risen. There were no *rounds* in this fight—no pausing to recover breath. Martin's anger rose with every blow, whether given or received ; and although he was knocked down flat four or five times, he rose again, and, without a second's delay, rushed headlong at his enemy. Feeling that he was too little and light to make much impression on Bob Croaker by means of mere blows, he endeavoured as much as possible to throw his weight against him at each assault ; but Bob stood his ground well, and after a time seemed even to be recovering strength a little.

Suddenly he made a rush at Martin, and, dealing him a successful blow on the forehead, knocked him down ; at the same time he himself tripped over a mole-hill and fell upon his face. Both were on their legs in an instant. Martin grew desperate. The white kitten swimming for its life seemed to rise before him, and new energy was infused into his frame. He retreated a step or two, and then darted forward like an arrow from a bow. Uttering a loud cry, he sprang completely in the air and plunged—head and fists together, as if he were taking a dive—into Bob Croaker's bosom ! The effect was tremendous. Bob went down like a shock of grain before the sickle ; and having, in their prolonged movements, approached close to the brink of the stream, both he and Martin went with a sounding splash into the deep pool and disappeared. It was but for a moment, however. Martin's head emerged first, with eyes and mouth distended to the utmost. Instantly, on finding bottom, he turned to deal his opponent another blow ; but it was not needed. When Bob Croaker's head rose to the surface there was no motion in the features, and the eyes were closed. The intended blow was changed into a friendly grasp, and exerting himself to the utmost, Martin dragged his insensible school-fellow to the bank, where, in a few minutes, he recovered sufficiently to declare in a sulky tone that he would fight no more.

"Bob Croaker," said Martin, holding out his hand, "I'm sorry we've had to fight. I wouldn't have done it but to save my kitten. You compelled me to do it, you know that. Come, let's be friends again.

Bob made no reply, but slowly and with some difficulty put on his vest and jacket.

"I'm sure," continued Martin, "there's no reason in bearing me ill-will. I've done nothing unfair, and I'm very sorry we've had to fight. Won't you shake hands ?"

Bob was silent.

"Come, come, Bob !" cried several of the bigger boys, "don't be sulky, man ; shake hands and be friends. Martin has licked you this time, and you'll lick him next time, no doubt, and that's all about it."

"Arrah, then, ye're out there intirely. Bob Croaker'll niver lick Martin Rattler, though he wos to live to the age of the great M'Thuselah," said a deep-toned voice close to the spot where the fight had taken place.

All eyes were instantly turned in the direction whence it proceeded, and the boys now became aware, for the first time, that the combat had been witnessed by a sailor, who, with a smile of approval beaming on his good-humoured countenance, sat under the shade of a neighbouring tree smoking a pipe of that excessive shortness and blackness that seems to be peculiarly beloved by Irishmen in the humbler ranks

of life. The man was very tall and broad-shouldered, and carried himself with a free-and-easy swagger, as he rose and approached the group of boys.

"He'll nivir bate ye, Martin, avic, as long as there's two timbers of ye houldin' togethir." The seaman patted Martin on the head as he spoke; and, turning to Bob Croaker, continued: "Ye ought to be proud, ye spalpeen, o' bein' wopped by sich a young hero as this. Come here and shake hands with him; dy'e hear? Troth, an' it's besmearin' ye with too much honour that same. There, that'll do. Don't say ye're sorry now, for it's lies ye'd be tellin' if ye did. Come along, Martin, and I'll converse with ye as ye go home. Ye'll be a man yet, as sure as my name is Barney O'Flannagan."

Martin took the white kitten in his arms and thrust its wet little body into his equally wet bosom, where the warmth began soon to exercise a soothing influence on the kitten's depressed spirits, so that, ere long it began to purr. He then walked with the sailor towards the village, with his face black and blue, and swelled and covered with blood, while Bob Croaker and his companions returned to the school.

The distance to Martin's residence was not great, but it was sufficient to enable the voluble Irishman to recount a series of the most wonderful adventures and stories of foreign lands that set Martin's heart on fire with desire to go to sea—a desire which was by no means new to him, and which recurred violently every time he paid a visit to the small sea-port of Bilton, which lay about five miles to the southward of his native village. Moreover, Barney suggested that it was time Martin should be doing for himself (he was now ten years old), and said that if he would join his ship he could get him a berth, for he was much in want of an active lad to help him with the coppers. But Martin Rattler sighed deeply, and said that, although his heart was set upon going to sea, he did not see how it was to be managed, for his aunt would not let him go.

Before they separated, however, it was arranged that Martin should pay the sailor's ship a visit, when he would hear a good deal more about foreign lands; and that, in the meantime, he should make another attempt to induce Aunt Dorothy Grumbit to give her consent to his going to sea.

CHAPTER IV.

A lesson to all stocking-knitters—Martin's prospects begin to open up.

IN the small sea-port of Bilton, before mentioned, there dwelt an old and wealthy merchant and ship-owner, who devoted a small portion of his time to business, and a very large portion of it to what is usually termed "doing good." This old gentleman was short, and stout, and rosy, and bald, and active, and sharp as a needle.

In the short time that Mr. Arthur Jollyboy devoted to business, he accomplished as much as most men do in the course of a long day. There was not a benevolent society in the town of which Arthur Jollyboy, Esquire, of the Old Hulk (as he styled his cottage), was not a member, director, secretary, and treasurer, all in one, and all at once! If it had been possible for man to be ubiquitous, Mr. Jollyboy would have been so naturally, or, if not naturally, he would

have made himself so by force of will. Yet he made no talk about it. His step was quiet, though quick; and his voice was gentle, though rapid; and he was chiefly famous for *talking* little and *doing* much.

Some time after the opening of our tale, Mr. Jollyboy had received information of Mrs. Grumbit's stocking movement. That same afternoon he put on his broad-brimmed white hat and walking out to the village in which she lived, called upon the vicar, who was a particular and intimate friend of his. Having ascertained from the vicar that Mrs. Grumbit would not accept of charity, he said abruptly,—

"And why not—is she too proud?"

"By no means," replied the vicar. "She says that she would think shame to take money from friends as long as she can work, because every penny that she would thus get would be so much less to go to the helpless poor, of whom, she says, with much truth, there are enough and to spare. And I quite agree with her as regards her principle; but it does not apply fully to her, for she cannot work so as to procure a sufficient livelihood without injury to her health."

"Is she clever?" inquired Mr. Jollyboy.

"Why, no, not particularly. In fact, she does not often exert her reasoning faculties, except in the commonplace matters of ordinary and everyday routine."

"Then she's cleverer than most people," said Mr. Jollyboy, shortly. "Is she obstinate?"

"No, not in the least," returned the vicar with a puzzled smile.

"Ah, well, good-bye, good-bye; that's all I want to know."

Mr. Jollyboy rose and hurrying through the village tapped at the cottage door, and was soon closeted with Mrs. Dorothy Grumbit. In the course of half-an-hour, Mr. Jollyboy drew from Mrs. Grumbit as much about her private affairs as he could, without appearing rude. But he found the old lady very close and sensitive on that point. Not so, however, when he got her upon the subject of her nephew. She had enough, and more than enough, to say about him. It is true she began by remarking sadly that he was a very bad boy; but as she continued to talk about him, she somehow or other gave her visitor the impression that he was a very *good* boy! They had a wonderfully long and confidential talk about Martin, during which Mr. Jollyboy struck Mrs. Grumbit nearly dumb with horror by stating positively that he would do for the boy—he would send him to sea! Then, seeing that he had hit the wrongest possible nail on the head, he said that he would make the lad a clerk in his office, where he would be sure to rise to a place of trust; whereat Mrs. Grumbit danced, if we may so speak, into herself for joy.

"And now, ma'am, about these stockings. I wanted two thousand pairs as soon as I can get them!"

"Sir?" said Mrs. Grumbit.

"Of course, not for my own use, ma'am; nor for the use of my family, for I have no family, and if I had, that would be an unnecessarily large supply. The fact is, Mrs. Grumbit, I am a merchant, and I send very large supplies of home-made articles to foreign lands, and two thousand pairs of socks are a mere dribble. Of course I do not expect you to make them all for me, but I wish you to make as many pairs as you can."

"I shall be very happy—" began Mrs. Grumbit.

"But Mrs. Grumbit, there is a peculiar formation which I require in my socks that will give you extra trouble, I fear; but I must have it, whatever the additional expense may be. What is your charge for the pair you are now making?"

"Three shillings," said Mrs. Grumbit.

"Ah! very good. Now, take up the wires, if you please, ma'am, and do what I tell you. Now, drop that stitch—good; take up this one—capital; and pull this one across that way—so: and that one across this way—exactly. Now, what is the result?"

The result was a complicated knot; and Mrs. Grumbit, after staring a few seconds at the old gentleman in surprise, said so, and begged to know what use it was of.

"Oh, never mind, never mind. We merchants have strange fancies and foreigners have curious tastes now and then. Please to make all my socks with a hitch like that in them all round, just above the ankle. It will form an ornamental ring. I'm sorry to put you to the trouble, but of course I pay extra for fancy-work. Will six shillings a pair do for these?"

"My dear sir," said Mrs. Grumbit, "it is no additional—"

"Well, well, never mind," said Mr. Jollyboy. "Two thousand pairs, remember, as soon as possible—close knitted, plain stitch, rather coarse worsted; and don't forget the hitch, Mrs. Grumbit, don't forget the hitch."

Ah! reader, there are many Mrs. Grumbits in this world requiring *hitches* to be made in their stockings!

At this moment the door burst open. Mrs. Dorothy Grumbit uttered a piercing scream, Mr. Jollyboy dropped his spectacles and sat down on his hat, and Martin Rattler stood before them with the white kitten in his arms.

For a few seconds there was a dead silence, while an expression of puzzled disappointment passed over Mr. Jollyboy's ruddy countenance. At last he said,—

"Is this, madam, the nephew who, you told me a little ago, is not addicted to fighting?"

"Yes," answered the old lady faintly, and covering her eyes with her hands, "that is Martin."

"If my aunt told you that, sir, she told you the truth," said Martin setting down the blood-stained white kitten, which forthwith began to stretch its limbs and lick itself dry. "I don't ever fight if I can help it, but I couldn't help it to-day."

With a great deal of energy, and a revival of much of his former indignation when he spoke of the kitten's sufferings, Martin recounted all the circumstances of the fight: during the recital of which Mrs. Dorothy Grumbit took his hand in hers and patted it, gazing the while into his swelled visage, and weeping plentifully, but very silently. When he had finished, Mr. Jollyboy shook hands with him and said he was a trump, at the same time recommending him to go and wash his face. Then he whispered a few words in Mrs. Grumbit's ear, which seemed to give that excellent lady much pleasure; after which he endeavoured to straighten his crushed hat, in which attempt he failed; took his leave, and promised to call again very soon, and went back to the Old Hulk—chuckling.

CHAPTER V.

Martin, being willing to go to sea, goes to sea against his will.

FOUR years rolled away, casting chequered light and shadow over the little village of Ashford in their silent passage—whitening the forelocks of the aged, and strengthening the muscles of the young. Death too, touched a hearth here and there, and carried desolation to a home; for four years cannot wing their flight without enforcing on us the lesson—which we are so often taught, and yet take so long to learn—that this is not our rest, that here we have no abiding city. Did we but ponder this lesson more frequently and earnestly, instead of making us sad, it would nerve our hearts and hands to fight and work more diligently—to work in the cause of our Redeemer—the only cause that is worth the life-long energy of immortal beings—the great cause that includes all others; and it would teach us to remember that our little day of opportunity will soon be spent, and that the night is at hand in which no man can work.

Four years rolled away, and during this time Martin, having failed to obtain his aunt's consent to his going to sea, continued at school, doing his best to curb the roving spirit that strove within him. Martin was not particularly bright at the dead languages; to the rules of grammar he entertained a rooted aversion; and at history he was inclined to yawn, except when it happened to touch upon the names and deeds of such men as Vasco di Gama and Columbus. But in geography he was perfect; and in arithmetic and book-keeping he was quite a proficient, to the delight of Mrs. Dorothy Grumbit, whose household books he summed up, and to the satisfaction of his fast friend, Mr. Arthur Jollyboy, whose ledgers he was—in that old gentleman's secret resolves—destined to keep.

Martin was now fourteen, broad and strong, and tall for his age. He was the idol of the school—dashing, daring, reckless, and good-natured. There was almost nothing that he would not attempt, and there were very few things he could not do. He never fought, however—from principle; and his strength and size often saved him from the necessity. But he often prevented other boys from fighting, except when he thought there was good reason for it; then he stood by and saw fair play. There was a strange mixture of philosophical gravity, too, in Martin. As he grew older he became more enthusiastic and less boisterous.

Bob Croaker was still at the school, and was, from prudential motives, a fast friend of Martin. But he bore him a secret grudge, for he could not forget the great fight.

One day Bob took Martin by the arm and said, "I say, Rattler, come with me to Bilton and have some fun among the shipping."

"Well, I don't mind if I do," said Martin. "I'm just in the mood for a ramble, and I'm not expected home till bed-time."

In little more than an hour the two boys were wandering about the dockyards of the sea-port town, and deeply engaged in examining the complicated rigging of the ships. While thus occupied, the clanking of a windlass and the merry, "Yo heave ho! and away she goes," of the sailors, attracted their attention.

"Hallo! there goes the *Firefly*, bound for the South Seas," cried Bob Croaker, "come let's see her start. I say, Martin, isn't your friend Barney O'Flannagan, on board?"

"Yes, he is. He tries to get me to go out every voyage, and I wish I could. Come quickly; I want to say good-bye to him before he starts."

"Why don't you run away, Rattler?" inquired Bob, as they hurried round the docks to where the vessel was warping out.

"Because I don't need to. My aunt has given me leave to go if I like; but she says it would break her heart if I do, and I would rather be screwed down to a desk for ever than do that, Bob Croaker."

"The vessel, upon the deck of which the two boys now leaped, was a large, heavy-built barque. Her sails were hanging loose, and the captain was giving orders to the men, who had their attention divided between their duties on board and their mothers, wives, and sisters, who still lingered to take a last farewell.

"Now, then, those who don't want to go to sea had better go ashore," roared the captain.

There was an immediate rush to the side.

"I say, Martin," whispered Barney, as he hurried past, "jump down below for'ard; you can go out o' the harbour mouth with us, and get ashore in one o' the shore-boats alongside. They'll not cast off till we're well out. I want to speak to you—"

"Man the fore-top-sails halyards," shouted the first mate.

"Ay, ay, sir-r-r!" and the men sprang to obey. Just then the ship touched on the bar at the mouth of the harbour, and in another moment she was aground.

"There, now, she's hard and fast!" roared the captain, as he stormed about the deck in a paroxysm of rage. But man's rage could avail nothing. They had missed the passage by a few feet, and now they had to wait the fall and rise again of the tide ere they could hope to get off.

In the confusion that followed, Bob Croaker suggested that Martin and he should take one of the punts, or small boats, which hovered round the vessel, and put out to sea where they might spend the day pleasantly in rowing and fishing.

"Capital!" exclaimed Martin. Let's go at once. Yonder's a little fellow who will let us have his punt for a few pence. I know him—Hallo, Tom!"

"Ay, ay," squeaked a boy, who was so small that he could scarcely lift the oar, light though it was, with which he sculled his punt cleverly along.

"Shove it alongside, like a good fellow; we want your boat for a little to row out a bit."

"It's a-blowin' too hard," squeaked the small boy, as he ranged alongside. "I'm afeared you'll be blowed out."

"Nonsense!" cried Bill Croaker, grasping the rope which the boy threw to him. "Jump on board, younker; we don't want you to help us, and you're too heavy for ballast. Slip down the side, Martin, and get in while I hold on to the rope. All right? Now I'll follow. Here, shrimp, hold the rope till I'm in, and then cast off. Look alive!"

As Bob spoke, he handed the rope to the little boy, but in doing so let it accidentally slip out of his hand.

"Catch hold o' the main chains, Martin—quick."

But Martin was too late. The current that swept out of the harbour whirled the light punt away from the ship's side and carried it out

seaward. Martin instantly sprang to the oar, turned the boat's head round. He was a stout and expert rower, and would soon have regained the ship; but the wind increased at the moment, and blew in a squall off shore, which carried him farther out despite his utmost efforts. Seeing that all further attempts were useless, Martin stood up and waved his hand to Bob Croaker, shouting as he did so, "Never mind, Bob, I'll make for the South Point. Run round and meet me, and we'll row back together."

The South Point was a low cape of land which stretched a considerable distance out to sea, about three miles to the southward of Bilton harbour. It formed a large bay, across which, in ordinary weather, a small boat might be rowed in safety. Martin Rattler was well-known at the sea-port as a strong and fearless boy, so that no apprehension was entertained for his safety by those who saw him blown away. Bob Croaker immediately started for the Point on foot, a distance of about four miles by land; and the crew of the *Firefly* were so busied with their stranded vessel that they took no notice of the doings of the boys.

But the weather now became more and more stormy. Thick clouds gathered on the horizon. The wind began to blow with steady violence, and shifted a couple of points to the southward, so that Martin found it impossible to keep straight for the Point. Still he worked perseveringly at his single oar, and sculled rapidly over the sea; but as he approached the Point, he soon perceived that no effort of which he was capable could enable him to gain it. But Martin's heart was stout. He strove with all the energy of hope until the Point was passed; and then, turning the head of his little boat towards it, he strove with all the energy of despair, until he fell down exhausted. The wind and tide swept him rapidly out to sea, and when his terrified comrade reached the Point, the little boat was but a speck on the seaward horizon.

Well was it then for Martin Rattler that a friendly heart beat for him on board the *Firefly*. Bob Croaker carried the news to the town, but no one was found daring enough to risk his life out in a boat on that stormy evening. The little punt had been long out of sight ere the news reached them, and the wind had increased to a gale. But Barney O'Flannagan questioned Bob Croaker closely, and took particular note of the point of the compass at which Martin had disappeared; and when the *Firefly* at length got under way, he climbed to the fore-top cross-trees, and stood there scanning the horizon with an anxious eye.

It was getting dark, and a feeling of despair began to creep over the seaman's heart as he gazed round the wide expanse of water, on which nothing was to be seen except the white foam that crested the rising billows.

"Starboard, hard!" he shouted suddenly.

"Starboard it is!" replied the man at the wheel, with prompt obedience.

In another moment Barney slid down the back-stay and stood on the deck, while the ship rounded to, and narrowly missed striking a small boat that floated keel up on the water. There was no cry from the boat; and it might have been passed as a mere wreck, had not the lynx-eye of Barney noticed a dark object clinging to it.

"Lower away a boat, lads," cried the Irishman, springing over-

board, and the words had scarcely passed his lips when the water closed over his head.

The *Firefly* was hove to, a boat was lowered and rowed towards Barney, whose strong voice guided his shipmates towards him. In less than a quarter of an hour the bold sailor and his young friend Martin Rattler were safe on board, and the ship's head was again turned out to sea.

It was full half-an-hour before Martin was restored to consciousness in the forecabin, to which his deliverer had conveyed him.

"Musha, lad, but ye're booked for the blue weather now, an' no mistake!" said Barney, looking with an expression of deep sympathy at the poor boy, who sat staring before him quite speechless. "The captain'll not let ye out o' this ship till ye get to the Gould Coast, or some sich place. He couldn't turn back av he wanted iver so much; but he doesn't want to, for he needs a smart lad like you, an' he'll keep you now, for sartin."

Barney sat down by Martin's side and stroked his fair curls, as he sought in his own quaint fashion to console him. But in vain. Martin grew quite desperate as he thought of the misery into which poor Aunt Dorothy Grumbit would be plunged, on learning that he had been swept out to sea in a little boat, and drowned, as she would naturally suppose. In his frenzy he entreated and implored the captain to send him back in the boat, and even threatened to knock out his brains with a handspike if he did not; but the captain smiled, and told him that it was his own fault. He had no business to be putting to sea in a small boat in rough weather; and he might be thankful he wasn't drowned. He wouldn't turn back now for fifty pounds twice told.

At length Martin became convinced that all hope of returning home was gone. He went quietly below, threw himself into one of the sailors' berths, turned his face to the wall, and wept long and bitterly.

CHAPTER VI.

The voyage—A pirate, chase, wreck, and escape.

TIME reconciles a man to almost anything. In the course of time Martin Rattler became reconciled to his fate, and went about the ordinary duties of a cabin-boy on board the *Firefly* just as if he had been appointed to that office in the ordinary way—with the consent of the owners and by the advice of his friends. The captain, Skinflint by name, and as surly an old fellow as ever walked a quarter-deck, agreed to pay him wages "if he behaved well." The steward, under whose immediate authority he was placed, turned out to be a hearty, good-natured young fellow, and was very kind to him. But Martin's great friend was Barney O'Flannagan, the cook, with whom he spent many an hour in the night watches, talking over plans, and prospects, and retrospects, and foreign lands.

As Martin had no clothes except those on his back which fortunately happened to be new and good, Barney gave him a couple of blue striped shirts, and made him a jacket, pantaloons, and slippers of canvas; and, what was of much greater importance, taught him how to make and mend the same for himself.

"Ye see, Martin, lad," he said, while thus employed one day, many weeks after leaving port, "it's a great thing, intirely, to be able to help yerself. For my part, I niver travel without my work-box in my pocket."

"Your work-box," said Martin, laughing.

"Jist so. An' it consists of wan sailmaker's needle, a ball o' twine, and a clasp-knife. Set me down with these before a roll o' canvas and I'll make ye a'most anything."

"You seem to have a turn for everything, Barney," said Martin. "How came you to be a cook?"

"That's more nor I can tell ye, lad. As far as I remimber, I began with murphies, when I was two foot high, in my father's cabin in ould Ireland. But that was on my own account intirely, and not as a purfession; and a sorrowful time I had of it, too, for I was for iver burnin' my fingers promiskiously, and fallin' into the fire ivery day more or less—"

"Stand by to hoist top-gallant sails," shouted the captain. "How's her head?"

"South and by east, sir," answered the man at the wheel.

"Keep her away two points. Look alive, lads. Hand me the glass, Martin."

The ship was close-hauled when these abrupt orders were given, battling in the teeth of a stiff breeze, off the coast of South America. About this time several piratical vessels had succeeded in cutting off a number of merchantmen near the coast of Brazil. They had not only taken the valuable parts of their cargoes, but had murdered the crews under circumstances of great cruelty. The ships trading to these regions were, consequently, exceedingly careful to avoid all suspicious craft as much as possible. It was, therefore, with some anxiety that the men watched the captain's face as he examined the strange sail through the telescope.

"A Spanish schooner," muttered the captain, as he shut up the glass with a bang. "I won't trust her. Up with the royals and rig out the stun'-sails, Mr. Wilson, (to the mate). Let her fall away, keep her head nor'-west, d'ye hear?"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Let go the lee braces and square the yards. Look sharp, now, lads. If that blackguard gets hold of us, ye'll have to walk the plank, every man of ye."

In a few minutes the ship's course was completely altered; a cloud of canvas spread out from the yards, and the *Firefly* bounded on her course like a fresh race-horse. But it soon became evident that the heavy barque was no match for the schooner, which crowded sail and bore down at a rate that bade fair to overhaul them in a few hours. The chase continued till evening, when suddenly the look-out at the mast-head shouted, "Land ho!"

"Where away?" cried the captain.

"Right ahead," sang out the man.

"I'll run her ashore sooner than be taken," muttered the captain, with an angry scowl at the schooner, which was now almost within range on the weather quarter, with the dreaded black flag flying at her peak. In a few minutes breakers were descried ahead.

"D'ye see anything like a passage?" shouted the captain.

"Yes, sir; two points on the weather-bow."

At this moment a white cloud burst from the schooner's bow, and a shot, evidently from a heavy gun, came ricochetting over the sea. It was well aimed, for it cut right through the barque's main-mast, just below the yard, and brought the main-top-mast, with all the yards, sails, and gearing above it, down upon the deck. The weight of the wreck, also, carried away the fore-top-mast, and in a single instant the *Firefly* was completely disabled.

"Lower away the boats," cried the captain. "Look alive, now; we'll give them the slip yet. It'll be dark in two minutes."

The captain was right. In tropical regions there is little or no twilight. Night succeeds day almost instantaneously. Before the boats were lowered and the men embarked it was becoming quite dark. The schooner observed the movement, however, and, as she did not dare to venture through the reef in the dark, her boats were also lowered and the chase was recommenced.

The reef was passed in safety, and now a hard struggle took place, for the shore was still far distant. As it chanced to be cloudy weather, the darkness became intense, and progress could only be guessed at by the sound of the oars; but these soon told too plainly that the boats of the schooner were overtaking those of the barque.

"Pull with a will, lads," cried the captain; "we can't be more than half-a-mile from shore; give way, my hearties."

"Surely, captain. we can fight them; we've most of us got pistols and cutlasses," said one of the men in a sulky tone.

"Fight them!" cried the captain; "they're four times our number, and every man armed to the teeth. If ye don't fancy walking the plank or dancing on nothing at the yard-arm, ye'd better pull away and hold your jaw."

By this time they could just see the schooner's boats in the dim light about half musket range astern.

"Back you' oars," shouted a stern voice in broken English, "Or I blow you out de watter in one oder moment—black-yards!"

This order was enforced by a musket shot, which whizzed over the boat within an inch of the captain's head. The men ceased rowing, and the boats of the pirate ranged close up.

"Now then, Martin," whispered Barney O'Flannagan, who sat at the bow oar, "I'm goin' to swim ashore; jist you slip arter me as quiet as ye can."

"But the sharks!" suggested Martin.

"Bad luck to them," said Barney as he slipped over the side; "they're welcome to me. I'll take my chance. They'll find me mortal tough, anyhow. Come along, lad, look sharp!"

Without a moment's hesitation Martin slid over the gunwale into the sea, and, just as the pirate boats grappled with those of the barque, he and Barney found themselves gliding as silently as otters towards the shore. So quietly had the manœuvre been accomplished, that the men in their own boat were ignorant of their absence. In a few minutes they were beyond the chance of detection.

"Keep close to me, lad," whispered the Irishman. "If we separete in the darkness, we'll niver forgather again. Catch hould o' my shoulder if ye get blowed, and splutter as much as you like. They can't hear us now, and it'll help to frighten the sharks."

"All right," replied Martin; "I can swim like a cork in such warm water as this. Just go a little slower and I'll do famously."

Thus encouraging each other, and keeping close together, lest they should get separated in the thick darkness of the night, the two friends struck out bravely for the shore.

CHAPTER VII.

Martin and Barney get lost in a great forest, where they see strange and terrible things.

ON gaining the beach, the first thing that Barney did, after shaking himself like a huge Newfoundland dog, was to ascertain that his pistol and cutlass were safe; for, although the former could be of no use in its present condition, still, as he sagaciously remarked, "it was a good thing to have, for they might chance to git powder wan day or other, and the flint would make fire, anyhow." Fortunately the weather was extremely warm; so they were enabled to take off and wring their clothes without much inconvenience, except that in a short time a few adventurous mosquitoes—probably sea-faring ones—came down out of the woods and attacked their bare bodies so vigorously that they were fain to hurry on their clothes again before they were quite dry.

The clouds began to clear away soon after they landed, and the brilliant light of the southern constellation revealed to them dimly the appearance of the coast. It was a low sandy beach skirting the sea and extending back for about a quarter of a mile in the form of a grassy plain dotted here and there with scrubby underwood. Beyond this was a dark line of forest. The light was not sufficient to enable them to ascertain the appearance of the interior. Barney and Martin now cast about in their minds how they were to spend the night.

"Ye see," said the Irishman, "it's of no use goin' to look for houses, because there's maybe none at all on this coast; an' there's no sayin' but we may fall in with savages—for them parts swarms with them; so we'd better go into the woods an'—"

Barney was interrupted here by a low howl, which proceeded from the woods referred to, and was most unlike any cry they had ever heard before.

"Och, but I'll think better of it. Pr'aps it'll be as well *not* to go into the woods, but to camp where we are."

"I think so too," said Martin, searching about for twigs and drift-wood with which to make a fire. "There is no saying what sort of wild beasts may be in the forest, so we had better wait till daylight."

A fire was quickly lighted by means of the pistol-flint and a little dry grass, which, when well bruised and put into the pan, caught a spark after one or two attempts, and was soon blown into a flame. But no wood large enough to keep the fire burning for any length of time could be found; so Barney said he would go up to the forest and fetch some. "I'll lave my shoes and socks, Martin, to dry at the fire. See ye don't let them burn."

Traversing the meadow with hasty strides, the bold sailor quickly reached the edge of the forest, where he began to lop off several dead branches from the trees with his cutlass. While thus engaged the howl which had formerly startled him was repeated. "Av I only knowed what ye was," muttered Barney in serious tone, "it would be some sort o' comfort."

A long cry of a different kind here interrupted his soliloquy, and soon after the first cry was repeated louder than before.

Clinching his teeth and knitting his brows the perplexed Irishman resumed his work with a desperate resolve not to be again interrupted. But he had miscalculated the strength of his nerves. Albeit as brave a man as ever stepped, when his enemy was before him, Barney was, nevertheless, strongly imbued with superstitious feelings; and the conflict between his physical courage and his mental cowardice produced a species of wild exasperation, which, he often asserted, was very hard to bear. Scarcely had he resumed his work when a bat of enormous size brushed past his nose so noiselessly that it seemed more like a phantom than a reality. Barney had never seen anything of the sort before, and a cold perspiration broke out upon him when he fancied it might be a ghost. Again the bat swept past close to his eyes.

"Musha, but I'll kill ye, ghost or no ghost," he ejaculated, gazing all round into the gloomy depths of the woods with his cutlass up-lifted. Instead of flying again in front of him, as he had expected, the bat flew with a whirring noise past his ear. Down came the cutlass with a sudden thwack, cutting deep into the trunk of a small tree, which trembled under the shock, and sent a shower of ripe nuts of a large size down upon the sailor's head. Startled as he was, he sprang backward with a wild cry; then half ashamed of his groundless fears, he collected the wood he had cut, threw it hastily on his shoulder, and went with a quick step out of the woods. In doing so he put his foot upon the head of a small snake, which wriggled up round his ankle and leg. If there was anything on earth that Barney abhorred and dreaded it was a snake. No sooner did he feel its cold form writhing under his foot, than he uttered a tremendous yell of terror, dropped his bundle of sticks, and fled precipitately to the beach, where he did not halt till he found himself knee-deep in the sea.

"Och, Martin, boy," gasped the affrighted sailor, "it's my belafe that all the evil spirits on arth live in yonder wood; indeed I do."

"Nonsense, Barney," said Martin, laughing; "there are no such things as ghosts; at any rate I'm resolved to face them, for if we don't get some sticks the fire will go out and leave us comfortless. Come; I'll go up with you."

"Put on yer shoes then, avic, for the sarpints are no ghosts, anyhow, and I'm tould they're pisonous sometimes."

They soon found the bundle of dry sticks that Barney had thrown down, and returning with it to the beach, they speedily kindled a roaring fire, which made them feel quite cheerful. True, they had nothing to eat; but having had a good dinner on board the barque late that afternoon, they were not much in want of food. While they sat thus on the sand of the sea-shore, spreading their hands before the blaze and talking over their strange position, a low rumbling of distant thunder was heard. Barney's countenance instantly fell.

"What's the matter, Barney?" inquired Martin, as he observed his companion gaze anxiously up at the sky.

"Och, it's comin', sure enough."

"And what though it does come?" returned Martin; "we can creep under one of these thick bushes till the shower is past."

"Did you iver see a thunder-storm in the tropics?" inquired Barney.

"No, never," replied Martin.

"Then, if ye don't want to feel and see it both at wance, come with me as quick as iver ye can."

Barney started up as he spoke, stuck his cutlass and pistol into his belt, and set off towards the woods at a sharp run, followed closely by his wondering companion.

Their haste was by no means unnecessary. Great black clouds rushed up towards the zenith from all points of the compass, and, just as they reached the wood, darkness so thick that it might almost be felt overspread the scene. Then there was a flash of lightning so vivid that it seemed as if a bright day had been created and extinguished in a moment, leaving the darkness ten times more oppressive. It was followed instantaneously by a crash and a prolonged rattle, that sounded as if a universe of solid worlds were rushing into contact overhead and bursting into atoms. The flash was so far useful to the fugitives that it enabled them to observe a many-stemmed tree with dense and heavy foliage, under which they darted. They were just in time, and had scarcely seated themselves among its branches when the rain came down in a way not only that Martin had never seen, but that he had never conceived of before. It fell, as it were, in broad heavy sheets, and its sound was a loud, continuous roar.

The wind soon after burst upon the forest and added to the hideous shriek of elements. The trees bent before it; the rain was whirled and dashing about in water-spouts; and huge limbs were rent from some of the larger trees with a crash like thunder, and swept far away into the forest. The very earth trembled and seemed terrified at the dreadful conflict going on above. It seemed to the two friends as if the end of the world were come; and they could do nothing but cower among the branches of the tree and watch the storm in silence, while they felt, in a way they had never before experienced, how utterly helpless they were and unable to foresee or avert the many dangers by which they were surrounded, and how absolutely dependent they were on God for protection.

For several hours the storm continued. Then it ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and the bright stars again shone down upon the peaceful scene.

When it was over, Martin and his comrade descended the tree and endeavoured to find their way back to the beach. But this was no easy matter. The haste with which they had run into the woods, and the confusion of the storm, had made them uncertain in which direction it lay; and the more they tried to get out, the deeper they penetrated into the forest. At length, wearied with fruitless wandering and stumbling about in the dark, they resolved to spend the night where they were. Coming to a place which was more open than usual, and where they could see a portion of the starry sky overhead, they sat down on a dry spot under the shelter of a spreading tree, and, leaning their backs against the trunk, very soon fell sound asleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

An enchanting land—An uncomfortable bed, and a queer breakfast—Many surprises and a few frights, together with a notable discovery.

"I've woked in paradise!"

Such was the exclamation that aroused Martin Rattler on the morning after his landing on the coast of South America. It was uttered by Barney O'Flannagan, who lay at full length on his back, his head propped up by a root of the tree under which they had slept, and his eyes staring right before him with an expression of concentrated amazement. When Martin opened his eyes, he too was struck dumb with surprise. And well might they gaze with astonishment; for the last ray of departing daylight on the night before had flickered over the open sea, and now the first gleam of returning sunshine revealed to them the magnificent forests of Brazil.

Yes, well might they gaze and gaze again in boundless admiration; for the tropical sun shone down on a scene of dazzling and luxuriant vegetation, so resplendent that it seemed to them the realization of a fairy tale. Plants and shrubs and flowers were there of the most curious and brilliant description, and of which they neither knew the uses nor the names. Majestic trees were there with foliage of every shape and size and hue—some with stems twenty feet in circumference, others more slender in form, straight and tall, and some twisted in a bunch together and rising upwards like fluted pillars; a few had buttresses, or natural planks, several feet broad, ranged all round their trunks, as if to support them; while many bent gracefully beneath the load of their clustering fruit and heavy foliage. Orange trees with their ripe fruit shone in the sunbeams like gold. Stately palms rose above the surrounding trees and waved their feathery plumes in the air, and bananas with broad enormous leaves rustled in the breeze and cast a cool shadow on the ground.

Well might they gaze in great surprise, for all these curious and beautiful trees were surrounded by and entwined in the embrace of luxuriant and remarkable climbing-plants. The parasitic vanilla with its star-like blossoms crept up their trunks and along their branches, where it hung in graceful festoons, or drooped back again almost to the ground. So rich and numerous were these creepers that in many cases they killed the strong giants whom they embraced so lovingly. Some of them hung from the tree-tops like stays from the masts of a ship, and many of them mingled their brilliant flowers so closely with the leaves that the climbing plants and their supporters could not be distinguished from each other, and it seemed as though the trees themselves had become gigantic flowering shrubs.

Birds, too, were there in myriads—and such birds! Their feathers were green and gold and scarlet and yellow and blue—fresh and bright and brilliant as the sky beneath which they were nurtured. The great toucan, with a beak nearly as big as his body, flew clumsily from stem to stem. The tiny, delicate humming-birds, scarce larger than bees, fluttered from flower to flower and spray to spray like points of brilliant green. But they were irritable, passionate little creatures, these lovely little things, and quarrelled with each other and fought like very wasps! Enormous butterflies, with wings of deep metallic blue, shot past or hovered in the air like gleams of light.

and green paroquets swooped from tree to tree, and chattered joyfully over their morning meal.

Well might they gaze with wonder, and smile too with extreme merriment, for monkeys stared at them from between the leaves with expressions of undisguised amazement, and bounded away shrieking and chattering in consternation, swinging from branch to branch with incredible speed, and not scrupling to use each other's tails to swing by when occasion offered. Some were big and red and ugly—as ugly as you can possibly imagine, with blue faces and fiercely grinning teeth; others were delicately formed, and sad of countenance, as if they were for ever bewailing the loss of near and dear relations, and could by no means come at consolation; and some were small and pretty, with faces no bigger than a halfpenny. As a general rule it seemed to Barney the smaller the monkey the longer the tail.

Yes, well might they gaze and gaze again in surprise and in excessive admiration; and well might Barney O'Flannagan—under the circumstances, with such sights and sounds around him, and the delightful odours of myrtle trees and orange blossoms and the Cape jessamine stealing up his nostrils—deem himself the tenant of another world, and evince his conviction of the fact in that memorable expression—"I've woked in paradise!"

But Barney began to find "paradise" not quite so comfortable as it ought to be; for when he tried to get up he found his bones pained and stiff from sleeping in damp clothes, and, moreover, his face was very much swelled, owing to the myriads of mosquitoes which had supped of it during the night.

"Arrah, then *won't* ye be done?" he cried angrily, giving his face a slap that killed at least two or three hundred of his tormentors. But thousands more attacked him instantly, and he soon found out—what every one finds out sooner or later in hot climes—that *patience* is one of the best remedies for mosquito bites. He also discovered shortly afterwards that smoke is not a bad remedy, in connection with patience.

"What are we to have for breakfast, Barney?" inquired Martin, as he rose and yawned and stretched his limbs.

"Help yerself to what ye please," said Barney, with a polite bow, waving his hand round him, as if the forest were his private property and Martin Rattler his honoured guest.

"Well, I vote for oranges," said Martin, going towards a tree which was laden with ripe fruit.

"An' I'll try plums, by way of variety," added his companion.

In a few minutes several kinds of fruit and nuts were gathered and spread at the foot of the tree under which they had reposed. Then Barney proceeded to kindle a fire; not that he had anything to cook, but he said it looked sociable-like, and the smoke would keep off the flies. The operation, however, was by no means easy. Everything had been soaked by the rain of the previous night, and a bit of dry grass could scarcely be found. At length he procured a little, and by rubbing it in the damp gunpowder which he had extracted from his pistol, and drying it in the sun, he formed a sort of tinder that caught fire after much persevering effort.

Some of the fruits they found to be good, others bad. The good they ate, the bad they threw away. After their frugal fare they felt much refreshed, and then began to talk of what they should do.

"We can't live here with parrots and monkeys, you know," said Martin; "we must try to find a village or town of some sort, or get to the coast, and then we shall perhaps meet with a ship."

"True, lad," replied Barney, knitting his brows and looking extremely sagacious; "the fact is, since neither of us knows nothing about anything, or the way to any place, my advice is to walk straight for'ard till we come to something."

"So think I," replied Martin; "therefore the sooner we set off the better."

Having no luggage to pack and no arrangements of any kind to make, the two friends rose from their primitive breakfast-table, and walked away straight before them into the forest.

All that day they travelled patiently forward, conversing pleasantly about the various trees and flowers and animals they met with by the way; but no signs were discovered that indicated the presence of man. Towards evening, however, they fell upon a track or footpath, which discovery rejoiced them much; and here, before proceeding farther, they sat down to eat a little more fruit—which indeed they had done several times during the day. They walked nearly thirty miles that day without seeing a human being: but they met with many strange and beautiful birds and beasts, some of which were of so fierce an aspect that they would have been very glad to have had guns to defend themselves with. Fortunately, however, all the animals seemed to be much more afraid of them than they were of the animals, so they travelled in safety. Several times during the course of the day they saw snakes and serpents, which glided away into the jungle on their approach, and could not be overtaken, although Barney made repeated darts at them, intending to attack them with his cutlass, which assaults always proved fruitless.

Once they were charged by a herd of peccaries—a species of pig or wild hog—from which they escaped by jumping actively to one side; but the peccaries turned and rushed at them again, and it was only by springing up the branches of a neighbouring tree that they escaped their fury. These peccaries are the fiercest and most dauntless animals in the forests of Brazil. They do not know what fear is; they will rush in the face of anything; and, unlike all other animals, are quite indifferent to the report of fire-arms. Their bodies are covered with long bristles, resembling very much the quills of the porcupine.

As the evening drew on, the birds and beasts and the innumerable insects, that had kept up a perpetual noise during the day, retired to rest; and then the nocturnal animals began to creep out of their holes and go about. Huge vampire-bats, one of which had given Barney such a fright the night before, flew silently past them, and the wild howlings commenced again. They now discovered that one of the most dismal of the howls proceeded from a species of monkey, at which discovery Martin laughed very much, and rallied his companion on being so easily frightened; but Barney gladly joined in the laugh against himself, for, to say truth, he felt quite relieved and light-hearted at discovering that his ghosts were converted into bats and monkeys!

There was one roar, however, which, when they heard it ever and anon, gave them considerable uneasiness.

"D'ye think there's lions in them parts?" inquired Barney, glancing





Breakfast in the Forest.

with an expressson of regret at his empty pistol, and laying his hand on the hilt of his cutlass.

"I think not," replied Martin, in a low tone of voice. "I have read in my school geography that there are tigers of some sort—jaguars or ounces, I think they are called—but there are no—"

Martin's speech was cut short by a terrific roar which rang through the woods, and the next instant a magnificent jaguar, or South American tiger, bounded on to the track a few yards in advance, and wheeling round, glared fiercely at the travellers. It seemed, in the uncertain light, as if his eyes were two balls of living fire. Though not so large as the royal Bengal tiger of India, this animal was nevertheless of immense size, and had a very ferocious aspect. His roar was so sudden and awful, and his appearance so unexpected, that the blood was sent thrilling back into the hearts of the travellers, who stood rooted to the spot, absolutely unable to move. This was the first large animal of the cat kind that either of them had seen in all the terrible majesty of its wild condition; and, for the first time, Martin and his friend felt that awful sensation of dread that will assail even the bravest heart when a new species of imminent danger is suddenly presented. It is said that no animal can withstand the steady gaze of a human eye, and many travellers in wild countries have proved this to be a fact. On the present occasion our adventurers stared long and steadily at the wild creature before them from a mingled feeling of surprise and horror. In a few seconds the jaguar showed signs of being disconcerted. It turned its head from side to side slightly, and dropped its eyes, as if to avoid their gaze. Then turning slowly and stealthily round, it sprang with a magnificent bound into the jungle and disappeared.

Both Martin and Barney heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"What a mercy it did not attack us!" said the former, wiping the cold perspiration from his forehead. "We should have had no chance against such a terrible beast with a cutlass, I fear."

"True, boy, true," replied his friend gravely; "it would have been little better than a penknife in the ribs o' sich a catur. I niver thought that it was in the power o' man or baste to put me in sich a fright; but the longer we live the more we learn, boy."

Barney's disposition to make light of everything was thoroughly subdued by this incident, and he felt none of his usual inclination to regard all that he saw in the Brazilian forests with a comical eye. The danger they had escaped was too real and terrible, and their almost unarmed condition too serious, to be lightly esteemed. For the next hour or two he continued to walk by Martin's side either in total silence or in earnest, grave conversation; but by degrees these feelings wore off and his buoyant spirits gradually returned.

The country over which they had passed during the day was of a mingled character. At one time they traversed a portion of dark forest, heavy and choked up with the dense and gigantic foliage peculiar to those countries that lie near to the equator; then they emerged from this upon what to their eyes seemed most beautiful scenery—mingled plain and woodland—where the excessive brilliancy and beauty of the tropical vegetation was brought to perfection by exposure to the light of the blue sky and the warm rays of the sun. In such lovely spots they travelled more slowly and rested more frequently, enjoying to the full the sight of the gaily-coloured birds

and insects that fluttered busily around them, and the delicious perfume of the flowers that decked the ground and clambered up the trees. At other times they came to plains, or *campos*, as they are termed, where there were no trees at all, and few shrubs, and where the grass was burned brown and dry by the sun. Over such they hurried as quickly as they could; and fortunately, where they chanced to travel, such places were neither numerous nor extensive, although in some districts of Brazil there are campos hundreds of miles in extent.

A small stream meandered through the forest, and enabled them to refresh themselves frequently, which was very fortunate; for the heat, especially towards noon, became extremely intense, and they could not have existed without water. So great, indeed, was the heat about mid-day that, by mutual consent, they resolved to seek the cool shade of a spreading tree, and try to sleep if possible. At this time they learned, to their surprise, that all animated nature did likewise, and sought repose at noon. God had implanted in the breast of every bird and insect in that mighty forest an instinct which taught it to rest and find refreshment during the excessive heat of mid-day; so that, during the space of two or three hours, not a thing with life was seen, and not a sound was heard. Even the troublesome mosquitoes, so active at all other times, day and night, were silent now. The change was very great and striking, and difficult for those who have not observed it to comprehend. All the forenoon, screams, and cries, and croaks, and grunts, and whistles ring out through the woods incessantly; while, if you listen attentively, you hear the low, deep, and never-ending buzz and hum of millions upon millions of insects, that dance in the air and creep on every leaf and blade upon the ground. About noon all this is hushed. The hot rays of the sun beat perpendicularly down upon what seems a vast untenanted solitude, and not a single chirp breaks the death-like stillness of the great forest, with the solitary exception of the metallic note of the uruponga, or bell-bird, which seems to mount guard when all the rest of the world has gone to sleep. As the afternoon approaches they all wake up, refreshed by their siesta, active and lively as fairies, and ready for another spell of work and another deep-toned noisy chorus.

The country through which our adventurers travelled, as evening approached, became gradually more hilly, and their march consequently more toilsome. They were just about to give up all thought of proceeding farther that night when, on reaching the summit of a little hill, they beheld a bright red light shining at a considerable distance in the valley beyond. With light steps and hearts full of hope they descended the hill and hastened towards it.

CHAPTER IX.

The hermit.

It was now quite dark, and the whole country seemed alive with fire-flies. These beautiful little insects sat upon the trees and bushes, spangling them as with living diamonds, and flew about in the air like little wandering stars. Barney had seen them before, in the West Indies; but Martin had only heard of them, and his delight

and amazement at their extreme brilliancy were very great. Although he was naturally anxious to reach the light in the valley, in the hope that it might prove to proceed from some cottage, he could not refrain from stopping once or twice to catch these lovely creatures ; and when he succeeded in doing so, and placed one on the palm of his hand, the light emitted from it was more brilliant than that of a small taper, and much more beautiful, for it was of a bluish colour, and very intense—more like the light reflected from a jewel than a flame of fire. He could have read a book by means of it quite easily.

In half-an-hour they drew near to the light, which they found proceeded from the window of a small cottage or hut.

"Whist, Martin," whispered Barney, as they approached the hut on tiptoe ; "there may be savages into it, an' there's no sayin' what sort o' craturers they are in them parts."

When about fifty yards distant, they could see through the open window into the room where the light burned ; and what they beheld there was well calculated to fill them with surprise. On a rude wooden chair, at a rough unpainted table, a man was seated, with his head resting on his hand and his eyes fixed intently on a book. Owing to the distance, and the few leaves and branches that intervened between them and the hut, they could not observe him very distinctly. But it was evident that he was a large and strong man, a little past the prime of life. The hair of his head and beard was black and bushy, and streaked with silver-gray. His face was massive, and of a dark olive complexion, with an expression of sadness on it, strangely mingled with stern gravity. His broad shoulders—and, indeed, his whole person—were enveloped in the coarse folds of a long gown or robe, gathered in at the waist with a broad band of leather.

The room in which he sat—or rather the hut, for there was but one room in it—was destitute of all furniture, except that already mentioned, besides one or two roughly-formed stools ; but the walls were completely covered with strange-looking implements and trophies of the chase ; and in a corner lay a confused pile of books, some of which were, from their appearance, extremely ancient. All this the benighted wanderers observed as they continued to approach cautiously on tiptoe. So cautious did they become as they drew near and came within the light of the lamp, that Barney at length attempted to step over his own shadow for fear of making a noise, and in doing so tripped and fell with considerable noise through a hedge of prickly shrubs that encircled the strange man's dwelling.

The hermit—for such he appeared to be—betrayed no symptom of surprise or fear at the sudden sound, but rising quietly though quickly from his seat, took down a musket that hung on the wall, and stepping to the open door demanded sternly, in the Portuguese language, "Who goes there?"

"Arrah, then, if ye'd help a fellow-cratur to rise, instead o' talkin' gibberish like that, it would be more to yer credit !" exclaimed the Irishman, as he scrambled to his feet and presented himself, along with Martin, at the hermit's door.

A peculiar smile lighted up the man's features as he retreated into the hut, and invited the strangers to enter.

"Come in," said he, in good English, although with a slightly foreign accent. "I am most happy to see you. You are English. I

know the voice and the language very well. Lived among them once, but long time past now—very long. Have not seen one of you for many years.”

With many such speeches and much expression of good-will the hospitable hermit invited Martin and his companion to sit down at his rude table, on which he quickly spread several plates of ripe and dried fruit, a few cakes, and a jar of excellent honey, with a stone bottle of cool water. When they were busily engaged with these viands, he began to make inquiries as to where his visitors had come from.

“We’ve come from the sae,” replied Barney, as he devoted himself to a magnificent pine-apple. “Och, but yer victuals is mighty good, Mister—what’s yer name?—’ticklerly to them that’s a’most starvin’.”

“The fact is,” said Martin, our ship has been taken by pirates, and we two swam ashore and lost ourselves in the woods; and now we have stumbled upon your dwelling, friend, which is a great comfort.”

“Hoigh, an’ that’s true,” sighed Barney, as he finished the last slice of the pine-apple.

They now explained to their entertainer all the circumstances attending the capture of the *Firefly*, and their subsequent adventures and vicissitudes in the forest; all of which Barney detailed in a most graphic manner, and to all of which their new friend listened with grave attention, and unbroken silence. When they had concluded, he said,—

“Very good. You have seen much in very short time. Perhaps you may see more by-and-by. For the present you will go to rest, for you must be fatigued. I will *think* to-night—to-morrow I will *speak*.”

“An’ if I may make so bould,” said Barney, glancing with a somewhat rueful expression round the hard earthen floor of the hut, “whereabouts may I take the liberty o’ sleepin’?”

The hermit replied by going to a corner, whence, from beneath a heap of rubbish, he dragged two hammocks, curiously wrought in a sort of light network. These he slung across the hut, at one end, from wall to wall, and throwing a sheet or coverlet into each, he turned with a smile to the visitors,—

“Behold your beds! I wish you a very good sleep—adois!”

So saying, this strange individual sat down at the table, and was soon as deeply engaged with his large book as if he had suffered no interruption; while Martin and Barney, having gazed gravely and abstractedly at him for five minutes, turned and smiled at each other, jumped into their hammocks, and were soon buried in deep slumber.

CHAPTER X.

An enemy in the night—The vampire bat—The hermit discourses on strange, and curious, and interesting things.

NEXT morning Martin Rattler awoke with a feeling of lightness in his head and a sensation of extreme weakness pervading his entire frame. Turning his head round to the right he observed that a third hammock was slung across the farther end of the hut, which was, no doubt, that in which the hermit had passed the night. • But

it was empty now. Martin did not require to turn his head to the other side to see if Barney O'Flannagan was there, for that worthy individual made his presence known, for a distance of at least sixty yards all round the outside of the hut, by means of his nose, which he was in the habit of using as a trumpet when asleep. It was as well that Martin did not require to look round, for he found, to his surprise, that he had scarcely strength to do so. While he was wondering in a dreamy sort of manner what could be the matter with him, the hermit entered the hut bearing a small deer upon his shoulders. Resting his gun in a corner of the room, he advanced to Martin's hammock.

"My boy!" he exclaimed in surprise, "what is wrong with you?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Martin faintly. "I think there is something wet about my feet."

Turning up the sheet, he found that Martin's feet was covered with blood! For a few seconds the hermit growled forth a number of apparently very pithy sentences in Portuguese, in a deep, guttural voice, which awakened Barney with a start. Springing from his hammock with a bound like a tiger, he exclaimed, "Och! ye black-guard, would ye murder the boy before me very nose?" and seizing the hermit in his powerful grasp, he would infallibly have hurled him, big though he was, through his own doorway, had not Martin called out, "Stop, stop, Barney! It's all right; he's done nothing," on hearing which the Irishman loosened his hold, and turned towards his friend.

"What is the matter, honey?" said Barney in a soothing tone of voice, as a mother might address her infant son.

The hermit, whose composure had not been in the slightest degree disturbed, here said,—

"The poor child has been sucked by a vampire bat."

"Ochone!" groaned Barney, sitting down on the table, and looking at his host with a face of horror.

"Yes, these are the worst animals in Brazil for sucking the blood of men and cattle. I find it quite impossible to keep my mules alive, they are so bad."

Barney groaned.

"They have killed two cows which I have tried to keep here, and one young horse—a foal you call him, I think; and now I have no cattle remaining, they are so bad."

Barney groaned again, and the hermit went on to enumerate the wicked deeds of the vampire bats, while he applied poultices of certain herbs to Martin's toe, in order to check the bleeding, and then bandaged it up; after which he sat down to relate to his visitors the manner in which the bat carries on its bloody operations. He explained, first of all, that the vampire bats are so large and ferocious that they often kill horses and cattle by sucking their blood out. Of course they cannot do this at one meal, but they attack the poor animals again and again, and the blood continues to flow from the wounds they make long afterwards, so that the creatures attacked soon grow weak and die. They attack men, too, as Martin knew to his cost; and they usually fix upon the toes and other extremities. So gentle are they in their operations, that sleepers do not feel the puncture which they make, it is supposed, with the sharp-hooked nail of their thumb; and the unconscious victim knows nothing of the

enemy who has been draining his blood until he awakens, faint and exhausted, in the morning.

Moreover, the hermit told them that these vampire bats have very sharp, carnivorous teeth, besides a tongue which is furnished with the curious organs by which they suck the life-blood of their victims; that they have a peculiar, leaf-like, overhanging lip; and that he had a stuffed specimen of a bat that measured no less than two feet across the expanded wings, from tip to tip.

"Och, the blood-thirsty spalpeen!" exclaimed Barney, as he rose and crossed the room to examine the bat in question, which was nailed against the wall. "Bad luck to them; they've ruined Martin entirely."

"Oh no," remarked the hermit with a smile. "It will do the boy much good the loss of the blood, much good, and he will not be sick at all to-morrow."

"I'm glad to hear you say so," said Martin; "for it would be a great bore to be obliged to lie here when I've so many things to see. In fact I feel better already, and if you will be so kind as to give me a little breakfast I shall be quite well."

While Martin was speaking, the obliging hermit—who, by the way, was now habited in a loose, short hunting-coat of brown cotton—spread a plentiful repast upon his table, to which, having assisted Martin to get out of his hammock, they all proceeded to do ample justice; for the travellers were very hungry after the fatigue of the previous day, and as for the hermit, he looked like a man whose appetite was always sharp set, and whose food agreed with him.

They had cold meat of several kinds, and a hot steak of vension just killed that morning, which the hermit cooked while his guests were engaged with the other viands. There was also excellent coffee, and superb cream, besides cakes made of a species of coarse flour or meal, fruits of various kinds, and very fine honey.

"Arrah! ye've the hoith o' livin' here!" cried Barney smacking his lips as he held out his plate for another supply of a species of meat which resembled chicken in tenderness and flavour. "What sort o' bird or baste may that be, now, av I may ask ye, Mister—what's yer name?"

"My name is Carlos," replied the hermit gravely, "and this is the flesh of the armadillo."

"Arma—what—o?" inquired Barney.

"Armadillo," repeated the hermit. "He's very good to eat, but very difficult to catch. He digs down so fast we cannot catch him, and must smoke him out of his hole."

"Have you many cows?" inquired Martin, as he replenished his cup with coffee.

"Cows?" echoed the hermit; "I have got no cows."

"Where do you get such capital cream, then?" asked Martin in surprise.

The hermit smiled. "Ah, my friends, that cream has come from a very curious cow. It is from a cow that grows in the ground."

"Grows!" ejaculated his guests.

"Yes, he grows. I will show him to you one day."

The hermit's broad shoulders shook with a quiet internal laugh. "I will explain a little of that you behold on my table. The coffee I get from the trees. There are plenty of them here. Much money is

made in Brazil by the export of coffee—very much. The cakes are made from the mandioca root, which I grow near my house. The root is dried and ground into flour, which, under the name *farina*, is used all over the country. It is almost the only food used by the Indians and Negroes."

"Then there are Injins and Niggers here, are there?" inquired Barney.

"Yes, a great many. Most of the Negroes are slaves; some of the Indians too; and the people who are descended from the Portuguese who came and took the country long ago, they are the masters.—Well, the honey I get in holes in the trees. There are different kinds of honey here; some of it is sour honey. And the fruits and roots, the plantains, and bananas, and yams, and cocoa-nuts, and oranges, and plums, all grow in the forest, and much more besides, which you will see for yourselves if you stay long here."

"It's a quare country, intirely," remarked Barney, as he wiped his mouth and heaved a sigh of contentment. Then, drawing his hand over his chin, he looked earnestly in the hermit's face, and, with a peculiar twinkle in his eye, said,—

"I s'pose ye couldn't favour me with the lind of a razor, could ye?"

"No, my friend; I never use that foolish weapon."

"Ah, well, as there's only monkeys and jaguars, and sich like to see me, it don't much signify; but my mustaches is gitin' mighty long, for I've been two weeks already without a shave."

Martin laughed heartily at the grave anxious expression of his comrade's face. "Never mind, Barney," he said, "a beard and moustache will improve you vastly. Besides, they will be a great protection against mosquitoes; for you are such a hairy monster, that when they grow nothing of your face will be exposed except your eyes and cheek-bones. And now," continued Martin, climbing into his hammock again and addressing the hermit, "since you won't allow me to go out a-hunting to-day, I would like very much if you would tell me something more about this strange country."

"An' maybe," suggested Barney modestly, "ye won't object to tell us something about yersilf—how you came to live in this quare, solitary kind of a way."

The hermit looked gravely from one to the other, and stroked his beard. Drawing his rude chair towards the door of the hut, he folded his arms, and crossed his legs, and gazed dreamily forth upon the rich landscape. Then, glancing again at his guests, he said slowly, "Yes, I will do what you ask—I will tell you my story."

"An' if I might make so bould as to inquire," said Barney, with a deprecatory smile, while he drew a short black pipe from his pocket, "have ye got sich a thing as 'baccy in them parts?"

The hermit rose, and going to a small box which stood in a corner, returned with a quantity of cut tobacco in one hand, and a cigar not far short of a foot long in the other! In a few seconds the cigar was going in full force, like a factory chimney; and the short black pipe glowed like a miniature furnace, while its owner seated himself on a low stool, crossed his arms on his breast, leaned his back against the door-post, and smiled, as only an Irishman can smile under such circumstances. The smoke soon formed a thick cloud, which effectually drove the mosquitoes out of the hut, and through which Martin, lying in his hammock, gazed out upon the sunlit orange and coffee

trees, and tall palms with their rich festoons of creeping plants, and sweet-scented flowers, that clambered over and round the hut and peeped in at the open door and windows, while he listened to the hermit, who continued for at least ten minutes to murmur slowly, between the puffs of his cigar, "Yes, I will do it—I will tell you my story."

CHAPTER XI.

The hermit's story.

"My ancestors," began the hermit, "were among the first to land upon Brazil, after the country was taken possession of in the name of the King of Portugal, in the year 1500. In the first year of the century, Vincent Yanez Pinçon, a companion of the famed Columbus, discovered Brazil; and in the next year, Pedro Alvarez Cabral, a Portuguese commander, took possession of it in the name of the King of Portugal. In 1503, Americus Vespucius discovered the Bay of All Saints, and took home a cargo of Brazil-wood, monkeys, and parrots; but no permanent settlement was effected upon the shores of the new continent, and the rich treasures of this great country remained for some years longer buried and unknown to man, for the wild Indians who lived here knew not their value.

"It was on a dark and stormy night in the year 1510. A group of swarthy and naked savages encircled a small fire on the edge of the forest on the east coast of Brazil. The spot where their watchfire was kindled is now covered by the flourishing city of Bahia. At that time it was a wilderness. Before them stretched the noble bay which is now termed *Bahia de Todos Santos*—All Saints' Bay.

"The savages talked earnestly and with excited looks as they stood upon the shore, for the memory of the wondrous ships of the white men that had visited them a few years before was deeply engraven on their minds; and now, in the midst of the howling storm, another ship was seen approaching their land. It was a small vessel shattered and tempest-tossed, that drove into the Bahia de Todos Santos on that stormy night. Long had it battled with the waves of the Atlantic, and the brave hearts that manned it had remained staunch to duty and strong in hope, remembering the recent glorious example of Columbus. But the storm was fierce and the bark was frail. The top-masts were broken and the sails rent; and worst of all, just as land hove in sight and cheered the drooping spirits of the crew, a tremendous wave dashed upon the ship's stern and carried away the rudder.

"As they drove helplessly before the gale towards the shore, the naked savages crowded down upon the beach and gazed in awe and astonishment at the mysterious ship. A few of them had seen the vessels of Americus Vespucius and Cabral. The rumour of the white men and their floating castles had been wafted far and wide along the coast and into the interior of Brazil, and with breathless wonder the natives had listened to the strange account. But now the vision was before them in reality. On came the floating castle, the white foam dashing from her bows, and the torn sails and ropes flying from her masts, as she surged over the billows and loomed through the driving spray.

"It was a grand sight to see that ship dashing straight towards

the shore at fearful speed; and those who looked on seemed to be impressed with a vague feeling that she had power to spring upon the strand and continue her swift career through the forest, as she had hitherto cleft her passage through the sea. As she approached, the savages shrank back in fear. Suddenly her frame trembled with a mighty shock. A terrible cry was borne to land by the gale, and all her masts went overboard. A huge wave lifted the vessel on its crest and flung her farther on the shore, where she remained firmly fixed, while the waves dashed in foam around her and soon began to break her up. Ere this happened, however, a rope was thrown ashore, and fastened to a rock by the natives. By means of this the crew were saved. But it would have been well for these bold navigators of Portugal if they had perished in the stormy sea, for they were spared by the ocean only to be murdered by the wild savages on whose shore they had been cast.

All were slain save one—Diego Alvarez Carreo, the captain of the ship. Before grasping the rope by which he reached the shore, he thrust several cartridges into his bosom and caught up a loaded musket. Wrapping the lock in several folds of cloth to keep it dry, he slid along the rope and gained the beach in safety. Here he was seized by the natives, and would no doubt have been barbarously slain with his unfortunate companions, but being a very powerful man he dashed aside the foremost and breaking through their ranks, rushed towards the wood. The fleet savages, however, overtook him in an instant, and were about to seize him when a young Indian woman interposed between them and their victim. This girl was the chief's daughter, and respect for her rank induced them to hesitate for a moment; but in another instant the Portuguese captain was surrounded. In the scuffle that ensued his musket exploded, but fortunately wounded no one. Instantly the horrified savages fled in all directions, leaving Carreo alone!

"The captain was quick-witted. He knew that among hundreds of savages it was madness to attempt either to fight or to fly, and the happy effect of the musket explosion induced him to adopt another course of action. He drew himself up proudly to his full height, and beckoned the savages to return. This they did, casting many glances of fear at the dreaded musket. Going up to one who, from his bearing and ornaments, seemed to be a chief, Carreo laid his musket on the sand, and, stepping over it so that he left it behind him, held out his hand frankly to the chief. The savage looked at him in surprise, and suffered the captain to take his hand and pat it; after which he began to examine the stranger's dress with much curiosity. Seeing that their chief was friendly to the white man, the other savages hurried him to the camp-fire, where he soon stripped off his wet clothes and ate the food which they put before him. Thus Diego Carreo was spared.

"Next day, the Indians lined the beach and collected the stores of the wrecked vessel. While thus employed, Carreo, shot a gull with his musket, which so astonished the natives that they regarded him with fear and respect amounting almost to veneration. A considerable quantity of powder and shot was saved from the wreck, so that the captain was enabled to keep his ascendancy over the ignorant natives; and at length he became a man of great importance in the tribe, and married the daughter of the chief. He went by the name

of *Caramuru*—‘the man of fire.’ This man founded the city of Bahia.

“The coasts of Brazil began too after this to be settled in various places by the Portuguese, who, however, were much annoyed by the Spaniards, who claimed a share in the rich prize. The Dutch and English also formed settlements, but the Portuguese still retained possession of the country, and continued to prosper. Meanwhile Diego Caramuru, ‘the man of fire,’ had a son who in course of time became a prosperous settler; and as his sons grew up he trained them to become cultivators of the soil and traders in the valuable products of the New World. He took a piece of ground, far removed from the spot where his father had been cast ashore, and a short distance in the interior of the country. Here the eldest sons of the family dwelt laboured, and died, for many generations.

“In the year 1808 Portugal was invaded by Napoleon Buonaparte, and the sovereign of that kingdom, John VI., fled to Brazil, accompanied by his court and a large body of emigrants. The king was warmly received by the Brazilians, and immediately set about improving the condition of the country. He threw open its ports to all nations, freed the land from all marks of colonial dependence, established newspapers, made the press free, and did everything to promote education and industry. But although much was done, the good was greatly hindered, especially in the inland districts, by the vice, ignorance, and stupidity of many of the Roman Catholic priests, who totally neglected their duties—which, indeed, they were incompetent to perform—and in many instances were no better than miscreants in disguise, teaching the people vice instead of virtue.

“Foremost among the priests who opposed advancement was a descendant of the ‘man of fire.’ Padre Caramuru dwelt for some years with an English merchant in the capital of Brazil, Rio de Janeiro. The padre was not an immoral man, but he was a fiery bigot, and fiercely opposed everything that tended to advance the education of the people. This he did, firmly believing that education was dangerous to the lower orders. His church taught him, too, that the Bible was a dangerous book, and whenever a copy fell into his hands he immediately destroyed it. During the disturbances that took place after the time of King John’s departure for Portugal, and just before Brazil became an independent state under his son, the Emperor Don Pedro I., Padre Caramuru lost a beloved and only brother. He was quite a youth, and had joined the army only a few months previously at the desire of his elder brother the padre, who was so overwhelmed by the blow that he ceased to take an active part in church or political affairs, and buried himself in a retired part of his native valley. Here he sought relief and comfort in the study of the beauties of nature by which he was surrounded, but found none. Then he turned his mind to the doctrines of his church, and took pleasure in verifying them from the Bible. But as he proceeded he found, to his great surprise, that these doctrines were, many of them, not to be found there; nay, further, that some of them were absolutely contradicted by the Word of God.

“Padre Caramuru had been in the habit of commanding his people not to listen to the Bible when any one offered to read it; but in the Bible itself he found these words, ‘Search the Scriptures.’ He had been in the habit of praying to the Virgin Mary, and begging her to

intercede with God for him ; but in the Bible he found these words : 'There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.' These things perplexed him much. But while he was thus searching as it were, for silver, the ignorant padre found gold ! He found that he did not require to *work* for salvation, but to *ask* for it. He discovered that the atonement had been made once for all by Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God ; and he read with a thrilling heart these words : 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

"Long and earnestly did the padre ponder these words and pray over them ; and gradually the Holy Spirit enlightened his mind, and he saw how hateful that system was which could forbid or discourage the reading of the blessed Word of God. He soon resolved to forsake the priesthood. But when he had done so, he knew not what to turn his hand to. He had no one like-minded to consult with, and he felt that it was wrong to eat the bread of idleness. Being thus uncertain what to do, he resolved in the meantime to carry goods into the interior of the country and offer them for sale. The land round his dwelling and his own gun would supply him with food ; and for the rest he would spend his time in the study of the Bible, and seek for more light and direction from God.

"Such," continued the hermit, "is a light sketch of the history of my country and of myself."

"Yourself !" exclaimed Martin.

"Yes. I am the Padre Caramuru ; or rather, I was. I am padre no longer, but Senhor Carlos Caramuru, a merchant. Yet I know not what to do. When I look round upon my country and see how they know not the precious Word of God, my heart burns in me, and I sometimes think that it is my duty to go forth and preach."

"No doubt ye are right," said Barney. "I've always bin of opinion that when a man feels very strong in his heart on any partic'lar subject, it's a sure sign that the Almighty intends him to have something more to do with that subject than other men who don't feel about it at all."

The hermit remained silent for a few minutes. "I think you are right, friend," he said ; "but I am very ignorant yet. I have no one to explain difficulties to me ; and I fear to go about preaching lest I should preach what is not true. I will study yet for a time, and pray. After that, perhaps, I may go forth."

"But you have told us nothing yet about the trade of the country," said Martin, "or its size or anything of that sort."

"I will soon tell you of that when I have lighted another cigar. This one does not draw well. Have you got a full pipe still, my friend ?"

"All right, Mr. Carrymooroo," replied Barney, knocking out the ashes. "I'll jist load wance more, and then—fire away."

In a few minutes the big cigar and short pipe were in full play, and the hermit continued :—

"This country is very large and very rich, but it is not well worked. The people are lazy, many of them, and have not much enterprise. Much is done, no doubt, but very much more *might* be done.

The empire of Brazil occupies nearly one-half of the whole continent of South America. It is 2,600 miles long, and 2,500 miles broad, which,

as you know perhaps is a little larger than all Europe. The surface of the country is beautiful and varied. The hilly regions are very wild, although none of the mountains are very high, and the woods are magnificent; but a great part of the land consists of vast grassy plains, which are called llanos, or campos, or silvas. The campos along the banks of the River Amazon are equal to six times the size of France; and there is one great plain, lying between the Sierra Ibiapaba and the River Tocantins, which is 600 miles long by 400 miles broad. There are very few lakes in Brazil, and only one worth speaking of—the Lagoa dos Platos—which is 150 miles long. But our rivers are the finest in the whole world, being so long and wide and deep and free from falls that they afford splendid communication with the interior of the land. But alas! there are few ships on these rivers yet, very few. The rivers in the north part of Brazil are so numerous and interlaced that they are much like the veins in the human body; and the great River Amazon and a few of its chief tributaries resemble the arteries.

"Then as to our produce," continued the hermit "who can tell it all? We export sugar and coffee, and gold, silver, lead, zinc, quick-silver, and amethysts, and we have diamond mines—"

"Di'mond mines!" echoed Barney; "och, but I would like for to see them. Sure they would sparkle most beautiful. Are they far off, Mr. Carrymooroo?"

"Yes, very far off. Then we export dye-woods and cabinet-woods, and drugs, and gums, and hides—a great many hides, for the campos are full of wild cattle, and men hunt them on horseback, and catch them with a long rope called a *lasso*."

"How I should like to have a gallop over these great plains," murmured Martin.

"Then we have," continued the hermit, "rice, tapioca, cocoa, maize, wheat, mandioca, beans, bananas, pepper, cinnamon, oranges, figs, ginger, pine-apples, yams, lemons, mangoes, and many other fruits and vegetables. The mandioca you have eaten in the shape of farina. It is very good food; one acre gives as much nutriment as six acres of wheat.

"Of the trees you have seen something. There are thousands of of kinds, and most magnificent. Some of them are more than thirty feet round about. There are two hundred different kinds of palms; and so thick stand the giant trees in many places, with creeping plants growing between, that it is not possible for man to cut his way through the forests in some parts. Language cannot describe the grandeur and glory of the Brazilian forests.

"We have numbers of wild horses, and hogs, and goats; and in the woods are tiger-cats jaguars, tapirs, hyenas, sloths, porcupines, and—but you have seen many things already. If you live you will see more. I need not tell you of these things; very soon I will show you some.

"The population of my country consists of the descendants of Portuguese settlers, native Indians, and Negroes. Of the latter, some are free, some slaves. The Indians go about nearly naked. Most of them are in a savage state: they paint their skins, and wear gaudy ornaments. The religion of the country is Roman Catholic, but all religions are tolerated; and I have much hope for the future of Brazil, in spite of the priests."

"And do you git much out o' the di'mond mines?" inquired Barney, whose mind was running on this subject.

"Oh yes, a great deal. Every year many are got, and Government, gets one-fifth of the value of all the gold and diamonds found in the country. One diamond was found a short time ago which was worth £40,000."

"Ye don't say so!" exclaimed Barney in great surprise, as he blew an immense cloud of smoke from his lips. "Now, that's extr'or'nary. Why don't everybody go to the mines and dig up their fortin at wance?"

"Because men cannot *eat* diamonds," replied the hermit gravely.

"Troth, I niver thought o' that; ye're right."

Martin laughed heartily as he lay in his hammock and watched his friend's expression while pondering this weighty subject.

"Moreover," resumed the hermit, "you will be surprised to hear that diamond and gold finding is not the most profitable employment in the country."

"The man who cultivates the ground is better off than anybody. It is a fact, a very great fact, a fact that you should get firmly fixed in your memory—that in less than *two years* the exports of sugar and coffee amounted to more than the value of all the diamonds found in *eighty* years. Yes, that is true. But the people of Brazil are not well off. They have everything that is necessary to make a great nation; but we are not a great nation, far from it."

The hermit sighed deeply as he ceased speaking, and fell into an abstracted frame of mind.

"It's a great country intirely," said Barney, knocking the ashes out of his pipe and placing that much beloved implement carefully in his pocket—"a great country; but there's a tremendous big screw loose somewhere."

"It seems curious to me," said Martin, in a ruminating tone of voice, "that people should not get on better in a country in which there is everything that man can desire to make him rich and happy. I wonder what it wants. Perhaps it's too hot, and the people want energy of character."

"Want energy!" shouted the hermit, leaping from his seat, and regarding his guests for a few moments with a stern expression of countenance; then, stretching forth his hand, he continued, in an excited tone: "Brazil does not want energy; it has only one want—it wants the Bible! When a country is sunk down in superstition and ignorance and moral depravity, so that the people know not right from wrong, there is only one cure for her—the Bible. Religion here is a mockery and a sham; such as, if it were better known, would make the heathen laugh in scorn. The priests are a curse to the land, not a blessing. Perhaps they are better in other lands—I know not; but well I know they are many of them false and wicked here. No truth is taught to the people—no Bible is read in their ears; religion is not taught—even morality is not taught; men follow the devices and desires of their own hearts, and there is no voice raised to say, 'You are doing wrong.' My country is sunk very low, and she cannot hope to rise, for the word of her Maker is not in her hand. True, there are a few, a very few Bibles in the great cities; but that is all—that cannot save her hundreds of towns and villages. Thousands of her people are slaves in body—all, all

are slaves in soul ; and yet you ask me what she wants. Ha ! she wants *truth*—she wants to be purged of falsehood. She has bones and muscles, and arteries and veins—everything to make a strong and healthy nation ; but she wants blood—she has no vital stream : yes, Brazil, my country, wants the Bible ! ”

CHAPTER XII.

A hunting expedition, in which are seen stones that can run, and cows that require no food—Besides a desperate encounter with a jaguar, and other strange things.

FOR many weeks Martin Rattler and his friend Barney O’Flannagan continued to dwell with the hermit in his forest home, enjoying his entertaining and instructive discourse, and joining with him in the hunting expeditions which he undertook for the purpose of procuring fresh food for his table. In these rambles they made constant discoveries of something new and surprising, in reference to both the vegetables and animals of that extraordinary region of the earth. They also had many adventures—some amusing and some terrible—which we cannot enlarge on here, for they would fill ten volumes such as this were they to be all recorded in detail.

One day the hermit roused them earlier than usual and told them to get ready, as he intended to go a considerable distance that day, and he wished to reach a particular spot before the heat of noon. So Martin and Barney despatched breakfast in as short a time as possible, and the hermit read them a chapter out of his large and well-thumbed Bible, after which they equipped themselves for the chase.

When Martin and his friend escaped from the pirates and landed on the coast of Brazil, they were clothed in sailor-like costume, namely, white duck trousers, coloured flannel shirts, blue jackets, round straw hats, and strong shoes. This costume was not very suitable for the warm climate in which they now found themselves, so their hospitable friend the hermit gave them two loose light cotton coats or jackets, of a blue colour, and broad brimmed straw hats similar to his own. He also gave them two curious garments called *ponchos*. The poncho serves the purpose of cloak and blanket. It is simply a square dark-coloured blanket with a hole in the middle of it, through which the head is thrust in rainy weather, and the garment hangs down all round. At night the poncho is useful as a covering. The hermit wore a loose open hunting-coat, and underneath it a girdle in which was a long sharp knife and a brace of pistols. His trousers were of blue-striped cotton. He usually carried a double-barrelled gun over his shoulder, and a powder-horn and bullet-bag were slung round his neck. Barney now procured from this hospitable man a supply of powder and shot for his large brass-mounted cavalry pistol. The hermit also made him a present of a long hunting-knife ; and he gave one of a smaller size to Martin. As Martin had no weapon, the hermit manufactured for him a stout bow and quiver full of arrows, with which, after some practice, he became reasonably expert.

Thus armed they sallied forth, and following the footpath that conducted from the door of the hut to the brow of the hill opposite,

they were soon buried in the shades of the great forest. On this particular morning, Barney observed that the hermit carried with him a stout spear, which he was not usually in the habit of doing. Being of an inquisitive disposition, he inquired the reason of his taking it.

"I expect to find a jaguar to-day," answered the hermit. "I saw him yesterday go down into the small valley in which my cows grow. I will show you my cows soon, Martin."

The hermit stopped short suddenly as he spoke, and pointed to a large bird, about fifty yards in advance of them. It seemed to bear a particular ill-will to a round rough stone which it pecked most energetically. After a few minutes the bird ceased its attacks and flew off; whereupon the rough stone opened itself out, and, running quickly away, burrowed into a little hole and disappeared!

"That is an armadillo," remarked the hermit, continuing to lead the way through the woods. "It is covered with a coat of mail, as you see; and when enemies come it rolls itself up like a ball and lies like a hard stone till they go away. But it has four little legs, and with them it burrows so quickly that we cannot dig it up, and must smoke it out of its hole—which I do often, because it is very good to eat, as you very well know."

While they continued thus to walk through the woods conversing, Martin and Barney were again interested and amused by the immense number of brilliant parrots and toucans which swooped about, chattering from tree to tree, in large flocks. Sometimes thirty or forty of the latter would come screaming through the woods and settle upon the dark-green foliage of a coffee-tree; the effect of which was to give the tree the appearance of having been suddenly loaded with ripe golden fruit. Then the birds would catch sight of the travellers and fly screaming away, leaving the tree dark-green and fruitless as before. The little green parrots were the most outrageously noisy things that ever lived. Not content with screaming when they flew, they continued to shriek, apparently with delight, while they devoured the seeds of the gorgeous sun-flowers; and more than once Martin was prompted to scatter a handful of stones among them, as a hint to be less noisy; but this only made them worse—like a bad baby, which, the more you tell it to be quiet, sets to work the more earnestly to increase and add to the vigour of its roaring. So Martin wisely let the parrots alone. They also startled in passing through swampy places, several large blue herons and long-legged cranes; and on many of the trees they observed the curious hanging nests of a bird, which the hermit told them was the large oriole. These nests hung in long strings from the tops of the palm-trees, and the birds were very actively employed moving about and chattering round their swinging villages; on seeing which Martin could not help remarking that it would astonish the colony not a little, if the top house were to give way and let all the mansions below come tumbling to the ground!

They were disappointed, however, in not seeing monkeys gambling among the trees, as they had expected.

"Ah! my friends," said the hermit, "travellers in my country are very often disappointed. They come here expecting to see everything all at once; but although there are jaguars, and serpents, and bears, and monkeys, plenty of them, as your ears can tell you, these

creatures keep out of the sight of man as much as possible. They won't come out of the woods and show themselves to please travellers. You have been very lucky since you arrived. Many travellers go about for months together and do not see half so much as you."

"That's thrue," observed Barney, with his head a little on one side, and his eyes cast up in a sort of meditative frown, as if he were engaged in subjecting the hermit's remarks to a process of severe philosophical contemplation; "but I would be very well plazed av the wild bastes would show themselves now and then, for—"

Martin Rattler burst into a loud laugh, for Barney's upward glance of contemplation was suddenly transformed into a gaze of intense astonishment, as he beheld the blue countenance of a large red monkey staring down upon him from amid the branches of an overhanging tree. The monkey's face expressed, if possible, greater surprise than that of the Irishman, and its mouth was partially open and thrust forward in a sort of threatening and inquiring manner. There seemed to be some bond of sympathy between the monkey and the man, for while *its* mouth opened *his* mouth opened too.

"A-a-a-a—ah!" exclaimed the monkey.

A facetious smile overspread Barney's face. "Och! be all manes; the same to you kindly," said he, taking off his hat and making a low bow.

The civility did not seem to be appreciated, however; for the monkey put on a most indignant frown and displayed a terrible double row of long brilliant teeth and red gums, while it uttered a shriek of passion, twisted its long tail round a branch, and hurled itself, with a motion more like that of a bird than a beast, into the midst of the tree and disappeared, leaving Martin and Barney and the hermit each with a very broad grin on his countenance.

The hunters now arrived at an open pace where there were several large umbrageous trees, and as it was approaching mid-day they resolved to rest here for a couple of hours. Birds and insects were gradually becoming more and more silent, and soon afterwards the only sounds that broke upon their ears were the curious metallic notes of the urupongas, or bell-birds, which were so like to the rapid beating of a smith's hammer on an anvil, that it was with the greatest difficulty Barney was restrained from going off by himself in search of the "smiddy." Indeed he began to suspect that the worthy hermit was deceiving him, and was only fully convinced at last when he saw one of the birds. It was pure white, about the size of a thrush, and had a curious horn or fleshy tubercle upon its head.

Having rested and refreshed themselves, they resumed their journey a short time before the noisy inhabitants of the woods recommenced their active afternoon operations.

"Hallo! what's that?" cried Barney, starting back and drawing his pistol, while Martin hastily fitted an arrow to his bow.

Not ten paces in front of them a frightful monster ran across their path, which seemed so hideous to Martin that his mind instantly reverted to the fable of St. George and the Dragon, and he almost expected to see fire issuing from its mouth. It was a huge lizard, with a body about three feet long, covered with bright scales. It had a long, thick tail. Its head was clumsy and mis-shapen, and altogether its aspect was very horrible. Before either Martin or Barney could fire, the hermit dropped his gun and spear, sprang

quickly forward, caught the animal by the tail, and, putting forth his great strength to the utmost, swung it round his head and dashed its brains out against a tree.

Barney and Martin could only stare with amazement.

"This we call an iguana," said the hermit, as he piled a number of heavy stones on the carcass to preserve it from other animals. "It is very good to eat—as good as chicken. This is not a very big one; they are sometimes five feet long, but almost quite harmless—not venomous at all; and the only means he has to defend himself is the tail, which is very powerful, and gives a tremendously hard blow. But, as you see, if you catch him quickly he can do nothing."

"It's all very well for you, or even Barney here, to talk of catching him by the tail," said Martin, smiling; "but it would have puzzled me to swing that fellow round my head."

"Arrah! ye're right, boy; I doubt if I could have done it mesilf," said Barney.

"No fear," said the hermit, patting Martin's broad shonlders as he passed him and led the way; "you will be strong enough for that very soon—as strong as me in a year or two."

They now proceeded down into a somewhat dark and closely wooded valley, through which meandered a small rivulet. Here they had some difficulty in forcing their way through the dense under-wood and broad leaves, most of which seemed very strange to Martin and his comrade, being so gigantic. There were also many kinds of ferns, which sometimes arched over their heads and completely shut out the view, while some of them crept up the trees like climbing-plants. Emerging from this, they came upon a more open space, in the midst of which grew a number of majestic trees.

"There are my cows!" said the hermit, pausing as he spoke, and pointing towards a group of tall straight-stemmed trees that were the noblest in appearance they had yet seen. "Good cows they are," he continued, going up to one and making a notch in the bark with his axe; "they need no feeding or looking after, yet, as you see, they are always ready to give me cream."

While he spoke, a thick white liquid flowed from the notch in the bark into a cocoa-nut drinking cup, which the hermit always carried at his girdle. In a few minutes he presented his visitors with a draught of what they declared was most excellent cream.

The masseranduba, or milk-tree, as it is called, is indeed one of the most wonderful of all the extraordinary trees in the forests of Brazil, and is one among many instances of the bountiful manner in which God provides for the wants of his creatures. No doubt this might with equal truth be said of all the gifts that a beneficent Creator bestows upon mankind; but when, as in the case of this milk-tree, the provision for our wants comes in a singular and striking manner, it seems fitting and appropriate that we should specially acknowledge the gift as coming from the hand of Him who giveth us all things liberally to enjoy.

The milk-tree rises with a straight stem to an enormous height, and the fruit, about the size of a small apple, is full of rich and juicy pulp, and is very good. The timber, also, is hard, fine-grained, and durable—particularly adapted for such works as are exposed to the weather. But its most remarkable peculiarity is the rich vegetable milk which flows in abundance from it when the bark is cut. This

milk is so like to that of the cow in taste, that it can scarcely be distinguished from it, having only a very slight peculiarity of flavour, which is rather agreeable than otherwise. In tea or coffee it has the same effect as rich cream, and, indeed, is so thick that it requires to be diluted with water before being used. This milk is also employed as glue. It hardens when exposed to the air, and becomes very tough and slightly elastic, and is said to be quite as good and useful as ordinary glue.

Having partaken of as much milk as they desired, they continued their journey a little further, when they came to a spur of the sierra, or mountain range, that cuts through that part of the country. Here the ground became more rugged, but still densely covered with wood, and rocks lay piled about in many places, forming several dark and gloomy caverns. The hermit now unslung his gun and advanced to the foot of a cliff, near the further end of which there were several caves, the mouths of which were partially closed with long ferns and masses of luxuriant vegetation.

"Now we must be prepared," said the hermit, feeling the point of his spear. "I think there is a jaguar here. I saw him yesterday, and I am quite sure he will not go away till he tries to do some mischief. He little knows that there is nothing here to hurt but me."

The hermit chuckled as he said this, and resting his gun against the cliff near the entrance to the first cave which was a small one, he passed on to the next. Holding the spear in his left hand, he threw a stone violently into the cavern. Barney and Martin listened and gazed in silent expectation; but they only heard the hollow sound of the falling stone as it dashed against the sides of the cave, and then all was still.

"Och, then, he's off," cried Barney.

"Hush," said Martin; "don't speak till he has tried the other cave."

Without taking notice of their remarks, the hermit repeated the experiment at the mouths of two caverns farther on, with the like result.

"Maybe the spalpeen's hidin' in the little cave where ye laid down yer gun," suggested Barney, going towards the place as he spoke. "Och, then, come here, friend; sure it must be the mouth of a mine, for there's two o' the beautifullest dîmonds I ever—"

Barney's speech was cut short by a low peculiar sound, that seemed like the muttering of far distant thunder. At the same moment the hermit pulled him violently back, and placing himself in a firm attitude full in front of the cavern, held the point of the spear advanced before him.

"Martin," he whispered, "shoot an arrow straight into that hole—quick!"

Martin obeyed, and the arrow whizzed through the aperture. Instantly there issued from it a savage and tremendous roar, so awful that it seemed as if the very mountain were bellowing and that the cavern were its mouth. But not a muscle of the hermit's figure moved. He stood like a bronze statue, his head thrown back and his chest advanced, with one foot planted firmly before him and the spear pointing towards the cave. It seemed strange to Martin that a man should face what appeared to him unknown danger so boldly and calmly; but he did not consider that the hermit knew

exactly the amount of danger before him. He knew precisely the manner in which it would assail him, and he knew just what was necessary to be done in order to avert it; and in the strength of that knowledge he stood unmoved, with a slight smile upon his tightly compressed lips.

Scarcely had the roar ceased when it was repeated with tenfold fierceness; the bushes and fern leaves shook violently, and an enormous and beautifully-spotted jaguar shot through the air as if it had been discharged from a cannon's mouth. The hermit's eye wavered not; he bent forward a hair-breadth; the glittering spear-point touched the animal's breast, pierced through it, and came out at its sides below the ribs. But the force of the bound was too great for the strength of the weapon: the handle snapped in twain, and the transfixed jaguar struck down the hermit and fell writhing upon him!

In the excitement of the moment Barney drew his pistol from his belt and snapped it at the animal. It was well for the hermit at that moment that Barney had forgotten to prime his weapon; for although he aimed at the jaguar's skull, there is no doubt whatever that he would have blown out the hermit's brains. Before he could make a second attempt, Martin sprang toward the gun which leaned against the cliff, and running, quickly up he placed the muzzle close to the jaguar's ear and lodged a bullet in its brain. All this was done in a few seconds, and the hermit regained his legs just as the animal fell dead. Fortunately he was not hurt, having adroitly avoided the sharp claws of his enemy.

"Arrah! Mister Hermit," said Barney, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, "its yersilf that was well-nigh done for this time, an' no mistake. Did iver I see sich a spring! an' ye stud the charge jist like a stone wall—niver moved a fut!"

"Are you not hurt?" inquired Martin, somewhat anxiously; "your face is all covered with blood."

"Yes, boy, but it is the blood of the jaguar; thanks to you for your quick hand, I am not hurt at all."

The hermit washed his face in the neighbouring brook, and then proceeded to skin the jaguar, the carcass being worthless. After which they retraced their steps through the woods as quickly as possible, for the day was now far spent, and the twilight, as we have before remarked, is so short in tropical latitudes that travellers require to make sure of reaching the end of the day's journey towards evening, unless they choose to risk losing their way, and spending the night in the forest.

They picked up the iguana in passing; and on reaching the spot where the armadillo had burrowed the hermit paused and kindled a small fire over the hole, by means of his flint, steel, and tinder-box. He thus contrived to render the creature's habitation so uncomfortable that it rushed hurriedly out; then, observing that its enemies were waiting, it doubled its head and tail together, and became the image of a rough stone.

"Poor thing," said Martin, as the hermit killed it, "that reminds me of the ostrich of the desert, which, I'm told, when it is chased over the plains by men on horseback, and finds that it cannot escape, thrusts its head into a bush, and fancies, no doubt, that it cannot be seen, although its great body is visible a mile off!"

"Martin," said Barney, "this arth is full o' quare craturs intirely."

"That's true, Barney ; and not the least 'quare' among them is an Irishman, a particular friend of mine !"

"Hould yer tongue, ye spalpeen, or I'll put yer head in the wather !"

"I wish ye would, Barney, for it is terribly hot and mosquito-bitten, and you couldn't have suggested anything more delightful. But here we are once more at our forest home ; and now for a magnificent cup of coffee and a mandioca-cake."

"Not to mintion," added Barney, "a juicy stick of Igu Anny, an' a tender chop o' Army Dillo."

CHAPTER XIII.

Martin and Barney continue their travels, and see strange things—Among others, they see living jewels—They go to see a festa—They fight and run away.

MARTIN RATTLER and Barney O'Flannagan soon after this began to entertain a desire to travel farther into the interior of Brazil, and behold with their own eyes the wonders of which they had heard so much from their kind and hospitable friend the hermit. Martin was specially anxious to see the great river Amazon, about which he entertained the most romantic ideas—as well he might, for there is not such another river in the world for size, and for the many curious things connected with its waters and its banks. Barney, too, was smitten with an intense desire to visit the diamond mines, which he fancied must be the most brilliant and beautiful sight in the whole world ; and when Martin asked him what sort of place he expected to see, he used to say that he "pictur'd in his mind a great many deep and lofty caverns, windin' in an' out an' round about, with the sides and the floors and the ceilin's all of a blaze with glittering di'monds, an' top'zes, an' purls, an' what not ; with Naiggurs be the dozen picking them up in handfuls. An' sure," he would add, "if we was wance there, we could fill our pockets in no time, an' then, horray for ould Ireland ! an' live like imperors for ivermore."

"But you forget, Barney, the account the hermit has given us of the mines. He evidently does not think that much is to be made of them."

"Och ! niver mind the hermit. There's always good luck attends Barney O'Flannagan. An' sure if nobody wint for fear they would git nothing, all the di'monds that iver came out o' the mines would be lyin' there still. An' didn't he tell us there was wan got only a short time since, worth I don't know how many thousand pounds ? Arrah ! if I don't go to the mines an' git one the size o' my head, I'll let ye rig me out with a long tail an' set me adrift in the woods for a blue-faced monkey."

It so happened that this was the time when the hermit was in the habit of setting out on one of his trading-trips ; and when Martin told him of the desire that he and Barney entertained to visit the interior, he told them that he would be happy to take them along with him, provided they would act the part of muleteers. To this they readily agreed, being only too glad of an opportunity of making some return to their friend, who refused to accept any payment for his hospitality, although Barney earnestly begged of him to accept of his watch, which was the only object of value he was possessed of—and that wasn't worth much, being made of pinchbeck, and utterly

incapable of going! Moreover, he relieved their minds by telling them that they would easily obtain employment as canoemen on the Amazon, for men were very difficult to be got on that river to man the boats; and if they could stand the heat, and were willing to work like Indians, they might travel as far as they pleased. To which Martin replied, in his ignorance, that he thought he could stand anything; and Barney roundly asserted that, having been burnt to a cinder long ago in the "East Injies," it was impossible to overdo him any more.

Under these circumstances, therefore, they started three weeks later to visit a populous town about twenty miles off, from which they set out on their travels with a string of heavily-laden mules, crossed the low countries or campos lying near to the sea, and began to ascend the sierras that divide this portion of Brazil from the country which is watered by the innumerable rivers that flow into the mighty Amazon.

The cavalcade consisted of ten mules, each with two goodly-sized bales of merchandise on its back. They were driven and attended to by Negroes, whose costume consisted of a light cotton shirt with short sleeves, and a pair of loose cotton drawers reaching down to the knee. With the exception of a straw hat this was all they wore. Martin, and Barney, and the hermit each bestrode a mule, with a small bale slung on either side, over the front of which their legs dangled comfortably. They had ponchos with them, strapped to the mules' backs, and each carried a clumsy umbrella to shield him from the fierce rays of the sun; but our two adventurers soon became so hardened and used to the climate, that they dispensed with the umbrellas altogether.

The sierra or mountain range over which they passed was about thirty miles in extent, being in some places quite level and open, but in others somewhat rugged, and covered with large but thinly scattered trees, the most common of which had fine dark-green glossy leaves, with spikes of bright yellow flowers terminating the branchlets. There were also many peculiar shrubs and flowering plants, of a sort that the travellers had never seen the like of in their native land.

"How I wish," said Martin with a sigh, as he rode along beside his friend Barney, "that I knew something of botany."

Barney opened his eyes in surprise. "Arrah! it's too much of a philosopher ye are already, lad. What good would it do ye to know all the hard names that men have given to the flowers? Sure I wance wint after the doctor o' a ship, to carry his box for him when he wint on what he called botanical excursions; and the poor cratur used to be pokin' his nose for iver down at the ground, an' peerin' through his green spectacles at miserable bits o' plants, an' nivr seemin' to enjoy anything; when all the time *I* was lookin' far fornint me an' all around me, an' up at the sky, seein' ivry beautiful thing, and snifferin' up the sweet smells, an' in fact enjoyin' the whole univarse—an' my pipe to boot—like an intelligent cratur."

Barney looked round as he spoke with a bland, self-satisfied expression of countenance, as if he felt that he had given a lucid definition of the very highest style of philosophy, and proved that he, Barney O'Flannagan, was possessed of the same in no common degree.

"Well, Barney," rejoined Martin, "since you give me credit for

being a philosopher, I must continue to talk philosophically. Your botanical friend took a *microscopic* view of nature, while you took a *telescopic* view of it. Each view is good, but both views are better; and I can't help wishing that I were more of a philosopher than I am, especially in reference to botany."

"Humph!" ejaculated Barney, who seemed not quite to understand his young friend, "yer observations are remarkably thrue, and do ye great credit, for yer years.—Ah! Mr. Hermit, good luck to ye! I'm glad to see that ye've got some consideration for man and baste. I'm quite ready for my victuals, and so's my mule;—aren't you, avic?"

Barney's latter remark was addressed to his patient charger, from whose back he sprang as he spoke, and slackened its girths.

It was now approaching mid-day, and the hermit had pitched upon a large tree as a fitting spot for rest and refreshment. Water had been brought up the mountain in a huge calabash; but they did not require to use it, as they found a quantity in the hollow stump of a tree. There were several frogs swimming about in this miniature lake; but it was found to be fresh and clear and good notwithstanding.

Towards evening they passed a string of mules going towards the town which they had just left. They were driven by Negroes, most of whom were slaves, and nearly quite naked. A Brazilian merchant, wearing a picturesque broad-brimmed, high-crowned straw hat, a poncho, and brown leather boots armed at the heels with large sharp spurs, rode at the head, and gave the strangers a surly nod of his head as they passed. Soon after, they descended into the plain, and came to a halt at a sort of roadside public-house, where there was no sleeping accomodation, but where they found an open shed in which travellers placed their goods, and slung their hammocks, and attended to themselves. At the venda, close beside it, they purchased a large bag of farina, being short of that necessary article of food, and then set to work to prepare supper in the open air; while the merry Negroes, who seemed to enjoy life most thoroughly, laughed and sang as they removed the bales from the mules' backs and cooked their simple fare.

Barney's cooking propensities now came into full play, and with the variety of fruits and vegetables which the country afforded he exercised his ingenuity, and produced several dishes of so savoury a nature that the hermit was compelled to open his eyes in amazement and smack his lips with satisfaction, being quite unable to express his sentiments in words. While thus busily and agreeably employed, they were told by the owner of the venda that a *festa* was being celebrated at a village about a league distant from where they stood.

"I should like to see it above all things," said Martin eagerly; "could we not go?"

The hermit frowned. "Yes, we can go, but it will be to behold folly. Perhaps it will be a good lesson from which much may be learned. We will go."

"It's not a step that I'll budge till I've finished me pipe," said Barney, pulling away at that bosom friend with unexampled energy. "To smoke," he continued, winking gently with one eye, "is the first law of nature; jist give me ten minutes more, an' I'm your man for anything."

Being a fine evening they proceeded on foot. In about an hour

after setting out they approached the village, which lay in a beautiful valley below them. Sounds of mirth and music rose like a distant murmur on the air, and mingled with the songs of birds and insects. Then the sun went down, and in a few minutes it grew dark, while the brilliant fire-flies began their nocturnal gambols. Suddenly a bright flame burst over the village, and a flight of magnificent rockets shot up into the sky, and burst into a hundred bright and variously-coloured stars, which paled for a few seconds the lights of nature. But they vanished in a moment, and the clear stars shed abroad their undying lustre, seeming, in their quiet, unfading beauty, a gentle satire on the short-lived and gairish productions of man.

"Mighty purty, no doubt," exclaimed Barney. "Is this the Emperor's birth-day?"

"No," replied the hermit, shaking his head; "that is the way in which the false priests amuse the people. The poor Indian and the Negro, and, indeed, the ignorant Brazilian, thinks it very grand; and the priests let them think it is pleasing to the God of heaven. Ah! here comes an old Negro; we will ask him."

Several country people, in varied and picturesque costumes, hurried past the travellers towards the village; and as they came to a foot-path that joined the road, an old Negro approached them. Saluting him in the Portuguese language, the hermit said, "Friend, why do they let off rockets to-night?"

"Por Dios" (for God), answered the old man, looking and pointing upwards with grave solemnity. Without vouchsafing another word, he hurried away.

"So they think," said the hermit, "and so they are taught by the priests. Music, noise, and fireworks please these ignorant people; and so the priests, who are mostly as ignorant as the people, tell them it is a good part of religious ceremony."

Presently a band of young girls came laughing and singing along the road. They were dressed in pure white, their rich black tresses being uncovered and ornamented with flowers and what appeared to be bright jewels.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Martin, gazing after them; "what splendid jewels! Surely these must be the daughters of very rich people."

"Och, but they've been at the di'mond mines for certain! Did iver ye sae the like?"

The girls did indeed seem to blaze with jewels, which not only sparkled in their hair, but fringed their white robes, and were worked round the edges of their slippers; so that a positive light shone around their persons, and fell upon the path like a halo, giving them more the appearance of lovely supernatural beings than the daughters of earth.

"These jewels," said the hermit, "were never polished by the hands of men. They are fireflies."

"Fireflies!" exclaimed Martin and Barney simultaneously.

"Yes, they are living fireflies. The girls very often catch them and tie them up in little bits of gauze, and put them, as you see, on their dresses and in their hair. To my mind they seem more beautiful far than diamonds. Sometimes the Indians, when they travel at night, fix fireflies to their feet, and so have good lamps to their path."

While Barney was expressing his surprise at this information in

very racy language, they entered the village, and mingling with the throng of holiday-keepers, followed the stream towards the grand square.

The church, which seemed to be a centre of attraction, and was brilliantly illuminated, was a neat wooden building with two towers. The streets of the village were broad and straggling; and so luxuriant was the vegetation, and so lazy the nature of the inhabitants, that it seemed as if the whole place were overgrown with gigantic weeds. Shrubs and creeping-plants grew in the neglected gardens, climbed over the palings, and straggled about the streets. Plants grew on the tops of the houses, ferns peeped out under the eaves; and, in short, on looking at it, one had the feeling that ere long the whole place, people and all, must be smothered in superabundant vegetation!

The houses were all painted white or yellow, with the doors and windows bright green—just like grown-up toys; and sounds of revelry, with now and then the noise of disputation, issued from many of them.

It is impossible to describe minutely the appearance of the motley crowd through which our adventurers elbowed their way, gazing curiously on the strange scene, which seemed to them more like a dream than a reality, after their long sojourn in the solitudes of the forest. Processions headed by long-robed priests with flambeaux and crucifixes; young girls in light costumes and long white cotton shawls, selling sweet cakes of mandioca flour and bonbons; swarthy Brazilians, some in white jackets, loose cotton drawers, and straw hats, others in brown leather boots and ponchos; Negroes in short white drawers and shirts, besides many without any clothing above their waists; Indians from the interior, copper-coloured, and some of them, fine-looking men, having only a strip of cloth about their loins;—such were the strange crew whose loud voices, added to the whiz of rockets, squibs, crackers, guns, and musical instruments, created a deafening noise.

In the midst of the village there was a tree of such enormous size that it quite took our travellers by surprise. It was a wild fig-tree, capable of sheltering a thousand persons under its shadow! Here a spirited *fandango* was going on, and they stood for some time watching the movements of the performers. Growing tired of this, they wandered about until they came to a less crowded part of the village, and entered a pleasant grove of trees skirting the road by which they had arrived. While sauntering here, enjoying the cool night breeze and delicious perfume of flowers, a woman uttered a piercing shriek near to them. It was instantly followed by loud voices in altercation. Ever ready to fly to the help of womankind, and, generally, to assist in a "row," Barney darted through the bushes, and came upon the scene of action just in time to see the white skirt of a female's dress disappear down an avenue, and to behold two Brazilians savagely writhing in mortal strife. At the moment he came up, one of the combatants had overcome the other, and a fierce smile of triumph crossed his swarthy countenance as he raised his gleaming knife.

"Och, ye murtherer! would ye attimpt that same?" cried Barney, catching the man by the wrist and hurling him on his back. The other sprang up on being thus unexpectedly freed, and darted away; while the thwarted man uttered a yell of disappointment, and sprang

like a tiger at Barney's throat. A blow, however, from the Irishman's fist, quietly delivered, and straight between the eyes, stretched the Brazilian on the ground. At the same moment a party of men, attracted by the cries, burst through the bushes and surrounded the successful champion. Seeing their countryman apparently dead upon the ground, they rushed upon Barney in a body; but the first who came within reach was felled in an instant, and the others were checked in their career by the sudden appearance of the hermit and Martin Rattler. The noise of many voices, as of people hastening towards them, was heard at the same time.

"We have no time to loose; do as I bid you," whispered the hermit. Whirling a heavy stick round his head the hermit shouted the single word "Charge!" and dashed forward.

Barney and Martin obeyed. Three Brazilians went down like nine-pins; the rest turned and fled precipitately.

"Now, run for life!" cried the hermit, setting the example. Barney hesitated to follow what he deemed a cowardly flight, but the yells of the natives returning in strong force decided the question. He and Martin took to their heels with right good will, and in a few minutes the three friends were far on the road which led to their night bivouac; while the villagers, finding pursuit hopeless, returned to the village, and continued the wild orgies of their festa.

CHAPTER XIV.

Cogitations and canoeing on the Amazon—Barney's exploit with an alligator—Stubborn facts—Remarkable mode of sleeping.

It is pleasant, when the sun is bright, and the trees are green, and when flowering shrubs and sweet-smelling tropical trees scent the balmy atmosphere at eventide, to lie extended at full length in a canoe, and drop easily, silently, yet quickly down the current of a noble river, under the grateful shadow of overhanging foliage; and to look lazily up at the bright blue sky which appears in broken patches among the verdant leaves, or down at the river in which that bright sky and those green leaves are reflected, or aside at the mud-banks where the greedy vultures are searching for prey and lazy alligators are basking in the sun; and to listen, the while, to the innumerable cries and notes of monkeys, toucans, parrots, orioles, bembéti or fly-catchers, white-winged and blue chatteringers, and all the myriads of birds and beasts that cause the forests of Brazil, above all other forests in the world probably, to resound with the gleeful songs of animated nature!

It is pleasant to be thus situated, especially when a cool breeze blows the mosquitoes and other insects off the water, and relieves you for a time from their incessant attacks. Martin Rattler found it pleasant, as he thus lay on his back with his diminutive pet marmoset monkey seated on his breast quietly picking the kernel out of a nut. And Barney O' Flannagan found it pleasant, as he lay extended in the bow of the canoe with his head hanging over the edge, gazing abstractedly at his own reflected visage, while his hands trailed through the cool water, and his young dog—a shaggy, indescribable beast with a bluff nose and a bushy tail—watched him intently, as a mother might watch an only child in a dangerous situation. And

the old, sun-dried, and storm-battered, and time-shrivelled mulatto trader, in whose canoe they were embarked, and whose servants they had become, found it pleasant, as he sat there perched in his little *montaria*, like an exceedingly ancient and over-grown monkey, guiding it safely down the waters of the great river of the Tocantins.

Some months have passed since we last parted from our daring adventures. During that period they had crossed an immense tract of country, and reached the head-waters of one of the many streams that carry the surplus moisture of central Brazil into the Amazon. Here they found an old trader, a free mulatto, whose crew of Indians had deserted him—a common thing in that country—and who gladly accepted their services, agreeing to pay them a small wage. And here they sorrowfully, and with many expressions of good-will, parted from their kind friend and entertainer the hermit. His last gift to Martin was the wonderfully small marmoset monkey before mentioned; and his parting souvenir to Barney was the bluff-nosed dog that watched over him with maternal care, and loved him next to itself;—as well it might, for if everybody had been of the same spirit as Barney O'Flannagan, the Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals would never have been passed in Britain.

It was a peculiar and remarkable and altogether extraordinary monkey, that tiny marmoset. There was a sort of romance connected with it, too; for it had been the mother of a indescribably small infant-monkey, which was killed at the time of its mother's capture. It drank coffee, too, like—like a Frenchman, and would by no means retire to rest at night until it had its usual allowance. Then it would fold its delicate little hands on its bosom, and close its eyes with an expression of solemn grief, as if, having had its last earthly wish gratified, it now resigned itself to—sleep. Martin loved it deeply, but his love was unrequited; for, strange to say, that small monkey lavished all its affection on Barney's shaggy dog. And the dog knew it, and was evidently proud of it, and made no objection whatever to the monkey sitting on his back, or his head, or his nose, or doing, in fact, whatever it choose whenever it pleased. When in the canoe, the marmoset played with Grampus, as the dog was named; and when on shore, it invariably travelled on its back.

Martin used to lie in the canoe half asleep and watch the little face of the marmoset, until, by some unaccountable mental process, he came to think of Aunt Dorothy Grumbit. Often did poor Martin dream of his dear old aunt, while sleeping under the shelter of these strange-leaved tropical trees and surrounded by the wild sounds of that distant land, until he dreamed himself back again in the old village. Then he would rush to the well-known school, and find all the boys there except Bob Croaker, who he felt certain must be away drowning the white kitten; and off he would go and catch him, sure enough, in the very act, and would give him the old thrashing over again, with all the additional vigour acquired during his rambles abroad thrown into it. Then he would run home in eager haste, and find old Mrs. Grumbit hard at the one thousand nine hundred and ninety-ninth pair of worsted socks; and fat Mr. Arthur Jollyboy sitting opposite to her, dressed in the old lady's bed-curtain chintz and high-crowned cap, with the white kitten in his arms and his spectacles on his chin, watching the process with intense interest,

and cautioning her not to forget the "hitch" by any means; whereupon the kitten would fly up in his face, and Mr. Jollyboy would dash through the window with a loud howl, and Mrs. Grumbit's face would turn blue, and, uncoiling an enormous tail, she would bound shrieking after him in among the trees and disappear! Martin usually wakened at this point, and found the marmoset gazing at his face with an expression of sorrowful solemnity, and the old sun-dried trader staring vacantly before him as he steered his light craft down the broad stream of the Tocantins.

The trader could speak little more English than sufficed to enable him to say "yes" and "no;" Barney could speak as much Portuguese as enabled him to say "no" and "yes;" while Martin, by means of a slight smattering of that language, which he had picked up by ear during the last few months, mixed now and then with a word or two of Latin, and helped out by a clever use of language of signs, succeeded in becoming the link of communication between the two.

For many weeks they continued to descend the river; paddling energetically when the stream was sluggish, and resting comfortably when the stream was strong, and sometimes dragging their canoe over rocks and sand-banks to avoid rapids—passing many villages and plantations of the natives by the way—till at last they swept out upon the bosom of the great Amazon river.

The very first thing they saw upon entering it was an enormous alligator, fully eighteen feet long, sound asleep on a mud-bank.

"Och! put ashore, ye Naygur," cried Barney, siezing his pistol and rising up to the bow of the canoe. The old man complied quickly, for his spirit was high and easily roused.

"Look out now, Martin, an' hould back the dog for fear he wakes him up," said Barney, in a hoarse whisper, as he stepped ashore and hastened stealthily towards the sleeping monster, catching up a handful of gravel as he went and ramming it down the barrel of his pistol. It was a wonderful pistol that—an Irish one by birth, and absolutely incapable of bursting, else assuredly it would have gone, as its owner said, to "smithereens" long ago.

Barney was not a good stalker. The alligator awoke, and made for the water as fast as it could waddle. The Irishmen rushed forward close up, as it plunged into the river, and discharged the compound of lead and stones right against the back of its head. He might as well have fired at the boiler of a steam-engine. The entire body of an alligator—back and belly, head and tail—is so completely covered with thick hard scales, that shot has no effect on it; and even a bullet cannot pierce its coat of mail, except in one or two vulnerable places. Nevertheless the shot had been fired so close to it that the animal was stunned, and rolled over on its back in the water. Seeing this, the old trader rushed in up to his chin and caught it by the tail; but at the same moment the monster recovered, and, turning round, displayed its terrific rows of teeth. The old man uttered a dreadful roar, and struggled to the land as fast as he could; while the alligator, equally frightened, no doubt, gave a magnificent flourish and splash with its tail, and dived to the bottom of the river.

The travellers returned disgusted to their canoe, and resumed their journey up the Amazon in silence.

The vulnerable places about an alligator are the soft parts under the throat and the joints of the legs. This is well known to the

jaguar, its mortal foe, which attacks it on land, and fastening on these soft parts, soon succeeds in killing it ; but should the alligator get the jaguar into its powerful jaws, or catch it in the water, it is certain to come off the conqueror.

The Amazon, at its mouth, is more like a wide lake or arm of the sea than a river. Mention has been already made of this noble stream in the hermit's story ; but it is worthy of more particular notice, for truly the Amazon is in many respects a wonderful river. It is the largest, though not quite the longest, in the world. Taking its rise among the rocky solitudes of the great mountain range of the Andes, it flows through nearly four thousand miles of the continent in an easterly direction, trending northward towards its mouth, and entering the Atlantic Ocean on the northern coast of South America, directly under the equator. In its course it receives the waters of nearly all the great rivers of central South America, and thousands of smaller tributaries, so that when it reaches the ocean its volume of water is enormous. Some idea may be formed of its majestic size from the fact that one of its tributaries—the Rio Negro—is fifteen hundred miles long, and varying in breadth, being a mile wide not far from its mouth, while higher up it spreads out in some places into sheets of ten miles in width. The Madeira, another tributary, is also a river of the largest size. The Amazon is divided into two branches at its mouth by the island of Marajo, the larger branch being ninety-six miles in width. About two thousand miles from its mouth it is upwards of a mile wide. So great is the force of this flood of water that it flows into the sea unmixed for nearly two hundred miles. The tide affects the river to a distance of about four hundred miles inland, and it is navigable from the sea for a distance of three thousand miles inland.

On the north bank of the Amazon there are ranges of low hills, partly bare and partly covered with thickets. These hills vary from three hundred to a thousand feet high, and extend about two hundred miles inland. Beyond them the shores of the river are low and flat for more than two thousand miles, till the spurs of the Andes are reached.

During the rainy season the Amazon overflows all its banks, like the Nile, for many hundreds of miles ; during which season, as Martin Rattler truly remarked, the natives may appropriately be called aquatic animals. Towns and villages, and plantations belonging to Brazilians, foreign settlers, and half-civilised Indians, occur at intervals throughout the whole course of the river ; and a little trade in dye-woods, india-rubber, medicinal drugs, Brazil nuts, coffee, etc., is done, but nothing to what might and ought to be, and perhaps would be, were this splendid country in the hands of an enterprising people. But the Amazonians are lazy, and the greater part of the resources of one of the richest countries in the world is totally neglected.

"Arrah !" said Barney, scratching his head and wrinkling his forehead intensely, as all that we have just written, and a great deal more, was told to him by a Scotch settler whom he found superintending a cattle estate and a saw-mill on the banks of the Amazon—"faix, then, I'm just as wise now as before ye begun to spake. I've no head for fagures whatsumdiver ; an' to tell me that the strame is ninety-six miles long and three thousand miles broad at the mouth,

and sich like calcerlations, is o' no manner o' use, and jist goes in at wan ear an' out at the tother."

Whereupon the Scotch settler smiled and said, "Well, then, if ye can remember that the Amazon is longer than all Europe is broad; that it opens up to the ocean not less than ten thousand miles of the interior of Brazil; and that, *comparatively* speaking, no use is made of it whatever, ye'll remember enough to think about with profit for some time to come."

And Barney did think about it, and ponder it, and revolve it in his mind, for many days after, while he worked with Martin and the old trader at the paddles of their montaria. They found the work of canoeing easier than had been anticipated; for during the summer months the wind blows steadily up the river, and they were enabled to hoist their mat-sail and bowl along before it against the stream.

Hotels and inns there were none—for Brazil does not boast of many such conveniences, except in the chief towns—so they were obliged, in travelling, to make use of an empty hut or shed, when they chanced to stop at a village, and to cook their own victuals. More frequently, however, they preferred to encamp in the woods, slinging their hammocks between the stems of the trees, and making a fire sometimes to frighten away the jaguars, which, although seldom seen, were often heard at night. They met large canoes and montarias occasionally coming down the stream, and saw them hauled up on shore, while their owners were cooking their breakfast in the woods; and once they came upon a solitary old Indian in a very curious position. They had entered a small stream in order to procure a few turtles' eggs, of which there were many in that place buried in the sand-banks. On turning a point where the stream was narrow and overhung with bushes and trees they beheld a canoe tied to the stem of a tree, and a hammock slung between two branches overhanging the water. In this an old Indian lay extended, quite naked and fast asleep! The old fellow had grown weary with paddling his little canoe, and finding the thicket along the river's banks so impenetrable that he could not land, he slung his hammock over the water, and thus quietly took his siesta. A flock of paroquets were screaming like little green demons just above him, and several alligators gave him a passing glance as they floundered heavily in the water below; but the red man cared not for such trifles. Almost involuntarily Martin began to hum the popular nursery rhyme,—

"Hushy ba, baby, on the tree top;
When the wind blows the cradle will rock."

"Arrah, if he was only two foot lower, its thirty pair o' long teeth would be stuck into his flank in wan minute, or I'm no prophet," said Barney, with a broad grin.

"Suppose we give him a touch with the paddle in passing," suggested Martin.

At this moment Barney started up, shaded his eyes with his hand, and after gazing for a few seconds at some object ahead of the canoe, he gave utterance to an exclamation of mingled surprise and consternation.

CHAPTER XV.

The great anaconda's dinner—Barney gets a fright—Turtles' eggs—A satisfactory "blow out"—Senhor Antonio's plantation—Preparations for a great hunt.

THE object which called forth the cry from our Irish friend, as related in the last chapter, was neither more nor less than a serpent of dimensions more enormous than Barney had ever before conceived of. It was upwards of sixteen feet long, and nearly as thick as a man's body; but about the neck it was three times that size. This serpent was not, indeed, of the largest size. In South America they grow to nearly forty feet in length. But it was fabulously gigantic in the eyes of our adventurers, who had never seen a serpent of any kind before.

"Oh!" cried Martin eagerly, "that must be an anaconda. Is it not?" he inquired, turning to the old trader.

"Yees; it dead," was the short reply.

"So it is!" cried Martin, who, on a nearer approach, observed that the brute's body was cut in two just below the swelling at the neck.

"Now, did ye iver," cried Barney with increased surprise, "see a sarpint with cow's horns growin' out at its mouth? Put ashore old boy; we must have a 'vestigation o' this remarkable cratur."

The canoe was soon aground, and in another minute the three travellers were busily engaged in turning over the carcass of the huge reptile, which they found, to the amazement of Martin and Barney, had actually swallowed an ox whole, with the exception of the horns, which protruded from his mouth!

After much questioning, in bad Portuguese, broken English, and remarkable signs, Martin succeeded in drawing from the old trader the information that anacondas of a large size are often in the habit of thus bolting horses and oxen at a mouthful.

There is not the slightest exaggeration in this fact. Readers who are inclined to disbelieve it may refer to the works of Wallace and Gardner on Brazil—authorities which cannot be doubted.

The reptile commences by patiently watching until an unfortunate animal strays near to where it is lying, when it darts upon it, encircles it in its massive coils, and crushes it to death in an instant. Then it squeezes the body and broken bones into a shapeless mass; after which it licks the carcass all over, and covers it with a thick coating of saliva. Having thus prepared its mouthful, the anaconda begins at the tail and gradually engulfs its victim, while its elastic jaws, and throat and stomach are distended sufficiently to let it in; after which it lies in a torpid state for many weeks, till the morsel is digested, when it is ready for another meal. A horse goes down entire, but a cow sticks at the horns, which the anaconda cannot swallow. They are allowed to protrude from its mouth until they decay and drop off.

They were at a loss at first to account for the creature being killed, but the old trader suggested that it had been found in a torpid state and slain by the Indian whom they had seen a short time ago enjoying his siesta among the trees.

Having cut it open, in order to convince themselves beyond a doubt that it had swallowed an entire ox, Martin and the old trader

re-embarked in the canoe, and Barney was on the point of joining them when the bushes close beside him were slightly stirred. Looking quickly round, he beheld the head and the glittering eyes of another anaconda, apparently as large as the dead one, ready to dart upon him—at least so he fancied ; but he did not wait to give it a chance. He fled instantly, and sprang towards the boat, which he nearly upset as he leaped into it, and pushed out into the stream. On reaching the middle of the river they looked back, but the anaconda was gone.

Soon after this they came to a long sand-bank, where the old trader said they should find as many turtles' eggs as they wished for, although to Barney and Martin there seemed to be nothing on the bank at all. The fresh-water turtle of the Amazon, of which there are various species, is one of the most useful of reptiles. Its flesh supplies abundance of good food ; and the eggs, besides being eaten, afford an excellent oil. The largest species grow to the length of three feet, and have a flattish oval shell of a dark colour, and quite smooth. Turtles lay their eggs about the beginning of September, when the sand-banks begin to be uncovered. They scrape deep holes for them and cover them carefully over, beating down the sand quite flat, and walking across the place several times, for the purpose of concealment. The eggs are then left to be hatched by the heat of the sun. But, alas for the poor turtles ! men are too clever for them. The eggs are collected by the natives in thousands, and, when oil is to be made of them, they are thrown into a canoe, smashed and mixed up together, and left to stand, when the oil rises to the top, and is skimmed off and boiled. It keeps well, and is used both for lamps and cooking. Very few of the millions of eggs that are annually laid arrive at maturity.

When the young turtles issue forth and run to the water, there are many enemies watching for them. Great alligators open their jaws and swallow them by hundreds ; jaguars come out of the forests and feed upon them ; eagles and buzzards and wood ibises are there, too, to claim their share of the feast ; and, if they are fortunate enough to escape all these, there are many large and ravenous fishes ready to seize them in the stream. It seems a marvel that any escape at all.

In a few minutes the old trader scraped up about a hundred eggs, to the immense satisfaction of Martin and Barney. Then he took a bow and arrow from the bottom of the montaria and shot a large turtle in the water, while his companions kindled a fire, intending to dine. Only the nose of the turtle was visible above the water, but the old man was so expert in the use of the bow that he succeeded in transfixing the soft part of the animal's neck with an arrow, although that part was under water. It was a large turtle, and very fat and heavy, so that it was with difficulty the trader lifted it upon his old shoulders and bore it in triumph to the spot where his companions were busily engaged with their cooking operations. Turtles are frequently shot with the arrow by the natives ; they are also taken in great numbers with the hook and the net.

Dinner was soon ready. Barney concocted an immense and savoury omelet, and the old trader cooked an excellent turtle-steak, while Martin prepared a junk of jaguar meat, which he roasted, being curious to taste it, as he had been told that the Indians like it very much. It was pretty good, but not equal to the turtles' eggs. The

shell of the egg is leathery, and the yoke only is eaten. The Indians sometimes eat them raw, mixed with farina. Cakes of farina, and excellent coffee, concluded their repast; and Barney declared he had never had such a satisfactory "blow out" in his life; a sentiment with which Martin entirely agreed, and the old trader—if one might judge from the expression of his black countenance—sympathized.

For many weeks our adventurers continued to ascend the Amazon, sometimes sailing before the wind; at other times when it fell calm, pushing the montaria up the current by means of long poles, or advancing more easily with the paddles. Occasionally they halted for a day at the residence of a wealthy cacao planter, in order to sell him some merchandise; for which purpose the canoe was unloaded, and the bales were opened out for his inspection. Most of these planters were Brazilians, a few were Yankee adventurers, and one or two were Scotch and English; but nearly all had married Brazilian ladies, who, with their daughters, proved good customers to the old trader. Some of these ladies were extremely "purty cratur's," as Barney expressed it; but most of them were totally uneducated and very ignorant—not knowing half so much as a child of seven or eight years old in more favoured lands. They were very fond of fine dresses and ornaments, of which considerable supplies were sent to them from Europe and the United States, in exchange for the valuable produce of their country. But although their dresses were fine and themselves elegant, their houses were generally very poor affairs—made of wood and thatched with broad leaves; and it was no uncommon thing to see a lady, who seemed from her gay dress to be fitted for a drawing-room, seated on an earthen floor. But there were all sorts of extremes in this strange land; for at the next place they came to, perhaps, they found a population of Negroes and Indians, and most of the grown-up people were half naked, while all the children were entirely so.

At one plantation where they resolved to spend a few days, the owner had a pond which was much frequented by alligators. These he was in the habit of hunting periodically, for the sake of their fat, which he converted into oil. At the time of their arrival he was on the eve of starting on a hunting expedition to the lake, which was about eight miles distant; so Barney determined to go and "see the fun," as the latter said.

"Martin, lad," remarked Barney, as they followed the Negro slave who had been sent by Senhor Antonio, the planter, to conduct them to the lake, while he remained behind for an hour or two to examine the bales of the old trader, "this is the queerest country, I believe, that iver was made. What with bastes, and varmints, and riptiles, and traes, and bushes, and rivers, it bates all creation."

"Certainly it does, Barney; and it is a pity there are so few people in it who know how to make use of the things that are scattered all around them. I'm inclined to think the hermit was right when he said that they wanted the Bible. They are too far sunk in laziness and idleness to be raised up by anything else. Just look," continued Martin, glancing round, "what a wonderful place this is! It seems as if all the birds and curious trees in Brazil had congregated here to meet us."

"So't does," said Barney, stopping to gaze on the scene through which they were passing, with an expression of perplexity on his

face, as if he found the sight rather too much even for *his* comprehension. Besides the parrots and scarlet and yellow macaws, and other strange looking birds which we have elsewhere mentioned, there were long-tailed light-coloured cuckoos flying about from tree to tree, not calling like the cuckoo of Europe at all, but giving forth a sound like the creaking of a rusty hinge; there were hawks and buzzards of many different kinds, and red-breasted orioles in the bushes, and black vultures flying overhead, and Muscovy ducks sweeping past with whizzing wings, and flocks of the great wood-ibis sailing in the air on noiseless pinions, and hundreds of other birds that it would require an ornithologist to name; and myriads of insects—especially ants and spiders, great and small—that no entomologist could chronicle in a life-time,—all these were heard and seen at once; while of the animals that were heard, but not so often seen, there were black and spotted jaguars, and pacas, and cotias, and armadillos, and deer, and many others that would take *pages* to enumerate and whole books to describe.

But the noise was the great point. That was the thing that took Martin and Barney quite aback, although it was by no means new to them; but they could not get used to it. And no wonder! Ten thousand paroquets shrieking passionately, like a hundred knife-grinders at work, is no joke; especially when their melodies are mingled with the discordant cries of herons, and bitterns, and cranes, and the ceaseless buzz and hum of insects, like the bagpipes drone, and the dismal creaking of boat-bills and frogs—one kind of which latter, by the way, does'nt croak at all, but *whistles*, ay, better than many a bird! The universal hubbub is tremendous. I tell you, reader, that you *don't* understand it, and you *can't* understand it; and if, after I had used the utmost excess of exaggerated language to convey a correct impression of the reality, you were to imagine that you really *did* understand it, you would be very lamentably mistaken—that's all!

Nevertheless, you must not run away with the idea that the whole empire of Brazil is like this. There are dark thick solitudes in these vast forests which are solemn and silent enough at times, and there are wide grassy campos and great sandy plains where such sounds are absent. Yet there are also thousands of such spots as I have just described, where all nature, in earth, air, and water, is instinct with noisy animal life.

After two hours' walk, Martin and his companion reached the lake, and here active preparations were making for the alligator hunt.

"Is that the only place ye have to spind the night in, Sambo?" said Barney to their conductor, as he pointed to a wooden shed near which some fifteen or twenty Negro slaves were overhauling the fishing tackle.

"Yis, massa," answered the black, showing his white teeth; "dat is de hottle of dis great city." Sambo could speak a little English, having wrought for several years on the coffee plantation of a Yankee settler. He was a bit of a wag, too, much to the indignation of his grave master, the Senhor Antonio, who abhorred jesting.

"Ye're too cliver, avic," said Barney, with a patronizing smile; "take care ye don't use up yer intellect too fast. It hurts the constitution in the long-run."

"I say, Barney," cried Martin, who had gone ahead of his companions,

"come here, man, and just look at this pond. It's literally crammed full of alligators."

"Musha, but there's more alligators than wather, I belave!" exclaimed Barney.

The pond was indeed swarming with these ferocious reptiles, which were constantly thrusting their ugly snouts above the surface, and then disappearing with a flourish of their powerful tails. During the rainy season this lake was much larger, and afforded ample room for its inhabitants; but at the height of the dry season, which it was at this time, there was little water, and it was much overstocked. When alligators are thus put upon short allowance of water they frequently bury themselves in the wet mud, and lie dormant for a long time, while the water continues to retire and leaves them buried. But when the first shower of the rainy season falls, they burst open their tomb and drag their dry bodies to the lake or river on whose margin they went to sleep.

An hour or two later the Senhor Antonio arrived, but as it was getting dark nothing could be done until the following morning; so they slung their hammocks under the wooden shed on the margin of the lake, and, in order to save themselves as much as possible from the bites of the tormenting mosquitoes, went to sleep with their heads tied up in their handkerchiefs and their hands thrust into their breeches pockets! The occasional splash and snort of contending alligators, about twenty yards off, varied the monotony of the hours of darkness, while the frogs and cranes and jaguars sang their lullaby.

CHAPTER XVI.

An alligator hunt—Remarkable explosions—The rainy season ushered in by an awful resurrection.

AT sunrise an expressive shout in Portuguese set the black slaves on their feet, and after a hasty breakfast of alligator-tail and farina they commenced operations. Alligator-tail is by no means bad food, and after the first mouthful—taken with hesitation and swallowed with difficulty—Martin and Barney both pronounced it "capital." Sambo, who had cooked the delicate morsel, and stood watching them, smacked his lips and added, "Fuss-rate."

All being now ready for the hunt, a number of Negroes entered the water, which was nowhere very deep, with long poles in their hands. This appeared to Martin and Barney a very reckless and dangerous thing to do, as no doubt it was. Nevertheless, accidents, they were told, very rarely happened.

Sambo, who was the overseer of the party, was the first to dash up to the middle in the water. "Hi," exclaimed that dingy individual, making a torrent of remarks in Portuguese, while he darted his long pole hither and thither; then, observing that Martin and Barney were gazing at him open-mouthed, he shouted, "Look out, boys! here 'im comes! Take care, ole feller, or he jump right down you' throat! hi-i-i!"

As he spoke, a large alligator, having been rudely stirred up from his muddy bed, floundered on the surface of the lake, and Sambo instantly gave it a thump over the back and a blow under the ribs,



Barney attempts to Lasso an Alligator.

which had the effect of driving it in the direction of the shore. Here a number of Negroes were ready for him, and the moment he came within reach of a coil of rope with a noose on the end of it, called a lasso, was adroitly thrown over the reptile's head ; ten or twelve men then hauled the lasso and dragged it ashore amid shouts of triumph. This alligator was twenty feet long, with an enormous misshapen head and fearful rows of teeth that were terrible to behold. The monster did not submit to be captured, however, without a struggle ; and the Negroes grew wild with excitement as they yelled and leaped madly about, seeking to avoid the dangerous jaws and the blows of its powerful tail. After some trouble, a second lasso was thrown over the tail, which was thus somewhat restrained in its movements ; and Sambo, approaching cautiously with an axe, cut a deep gash just at the root of that formidable appendage, which rendered it harmless. "Hi-i," shouted Sambo in triumph, as he sprang towards the animal's head and inflicted a similar gash in the neck ; "dare, you quite finish, ole feller."

"Musha, but that's thrue !" ejaculated Barney, who stood staring at the whole proceeding like one in a trance. "Did ye iver git a bite, Sambo ?"

Barney received no answer, for his sable friend was already up to his waist in the water with five or six of his brethren, who were flourishing their long poles and driving the snorting alligators towards the shore, where their comrades with lassos and harpoons, awaited them. Sometimes they harpooned the alligators, and then fastening lassos to their heads and tails, or to a hind leg, dragged them ashore ; at other times they threw the lasso over their heads at once, without taking the trouble to harpoon them. It was a terrible and a wonderful sight to witness the Negroes in the very midst of a shoal of these creatures, any one of which could have taken a man in his jaws quite easily, whence, once between those long saw-like rows of teeth, no man could have escaped to tell how sharp they were. The creatures were so numerous that it was impossible to thrust a pole into the mud without stirring up one of them ; but they were so terrified at the sudden attack and the shouts of the Negroes, that they thought only of escape.

Suddenly there arose a great cry. One of the lassos had snapped, and the alligator was floundering back into the water, when Sambo rushed in up to the armpits and caught the end of the rope. At the same moment two alligators made at the Negro with open jaws. It was probable that the animals went in his direction by mere accident, and would have brushed past him in blind haste ; but to Martin and Barney it seemed as if the poor man's fate were sealed, and they uttered a loud shout of horror as they bounded simultaneously into the water, not knowing what to do, but being unable to restrain the impulse to spring to Sambo's aid. Fortunately, however, one of the other Negroes was near Sambo. He sprang forward and dealt the alligators two tremendous blows with his pole on their snouts, right and left, which turned them off. Then other Negroes came up, laid hold of Sambo, who would not let go his hold and was being dragged into deep water, caught the end of the rope, and in ten minutes hauled their victim to the shore, where it was quickly despatched in the usual manner.

By this time about a dozen alligators, varying from ten to twenty

feet in length, had been captured ; and Barney at length became so bold that he requested to be allowed to try his hand at throwing the lasso, the dexterous use of which by the Negroes had filled him with admiration. A loud burst of laughter greeted this proposal, and Sambo showed a set of teeth that might have made even the alligators envious, as he handed the Irishman a coil of line.

"Now don't miss, Barney," cried Martin, laughing heartily, as his comrade advanced to the edge of the lake and watched his opportunity. "Mind, your credit as an expert hunter is at stake,"

The Senhor Antonio stood close behind the Irishman, with his arms folded and a sarcastic smile on his countenance.

"Don't send it down him's throat," yelled Sambo. "Hi-i ; dat's de way to swing um round. Stir um up, boys !—poke um up, villains, hi !"

The Negroes in the water obeyed with frantic glee, and the terrified monstors surged about in all directions, so that Barney found it almost impossible to fix his attention on any particular individual. At length he made up his mind, whirled the coil round his head, discharged the noose, caught the Senhor Antonio round the neck, and jerked him violently to the ground !

There was a simultaneous pause of horror among the slaves ; but it was too much for their risible faculties to withstand. With one accord they rushed howling into the water to conceal their laughter, and began to stir up and belabour the alligators with their poles, until the surface of the lake was a sheet of foam.

Meanwhile the Senhor Antonio sprang to his feet and began to bluster considerably in Portuguese : but poor Barney seemed awfully crestfallen, and the deep concern which wrinkled his face, and the genuine regret that sounded in the tones of his voice, at length soothed the indignant Brazilian, who frowned gravely, and waving his hand, as if to signify that Barney had his forgiveness, he stalked up to the shed, lighted a cigarito, and lay down in his hammock.

"Well !" said Martin in an undertone, "you did it that time, Barney. I verily thought the old fellow was hanged. He became quite livid in the face."

"Och ! bad luck to the lasso, say I. May I niver more see the swate groves o' Killarney if iver I meddle with wan again."

"Hi-i ; you is fuss-rate," said Sambo, as he and his comrades returned and busied themselves in cutting up the dead alligators. "You beat de Niggers all to not'ing. Not any of dis yere chiles eber lasso Sen'or Antonio yet ; no neber !"

It was some time before the Negroes could effectually subdue their merriment, but at length they succeeded, and applied themselves vigorously to the work of cutting out the fat. The alligators were all cut open, a work of no small difficulty owing to the hard scales which covered them as with coats of mail ; then the fat, which accumulates in large quantities about the intestines, was cut out and made up into packets in the skins of the smaller ones, which were taken off for this purpose.

These packets were afterwards carried to the senhor's dwelling, and the fat melted down into oil, which served for burning in lamps quite as well as train oil. The flesh of a smaller species of alligator, some of which were also taken, is considered excellent food ; and while the Negroes were engaged in their work, Barney made himself

useful by kindling a large fire and preparing a savory dish for "all hands," plentifully seasoned with salt and pepper, with which condiments the country is well supplied, and of which the people are exceedingly fond.

There was also caught in this lake a large species of fish called pirarucu, which, strangely enough, found it possible to exist in spite of alligators. They were splendid creatures, from five to six feet long, and covered with large scales more than an inch in diameter, which were beautifully marked and spotted with red. These fish were most delicately flavoured, and Barney exerted his talents to the utmost in order to do them justice. Martin also did his best to prove himself a willing and effectual assistant, and cleaned and washed the pirarucu steaks and the junks of alligator-tail to admiration. In short, the exertions of the two strangers in this way quite won the hearts of the Negroes, and after dinner the Senhor Antonio had quite recovered his good humour.

While staying at this place Martin had an opportunity of seeing a great variety of the curious fish with which the Amazon is stocked. These are so numerous that sometimes, when sailing up stream with a fair wind, they were seen leaping all round the canoe in shoals, so that it was only necessary to strike the water with the paddles in order to kill a few.

The peixe boi, or cow-fish, is one of the most curious of the inhabitants of the Amazon. It is about six feet long, and no less than five feet in circumference at its thickest part. It is a perfectly smooth and what we may call *dumpy* fish, of a leaden colour, with a semi-circular flat tail, and a large mouth with thick fleshy lips, resembling those of a cow. There are stiff bristles on the lips, and a few scattered hairs over the body. It has two fins just behind the head, and below these, in the females, there are two breasts, from which good white milk flows when pressure is applied. The cow-fish feeds on grass at the borders of rivers and lakes; and when suckling its young, it carries it in its fins or flippers, and clasps the little one to its breast, just as a mother clasps her baby! It is harpooned and taken for the sake of its fat, from which oil is made. The flesh is also very good, resembling beef in quality, and it was much relished by Martin and Barney, who frequently dined on beef-steaks cut from this remarkable cow-fish.

There was also another fish which surprised our adventurers not a little the first time they met with it. One evening Senhor Antonio had ordered a net to be thrown into the river, being desirous of procuring a few fresh fish for the use of his establishment. The Indians and Negroes soon after commenced dragging, and in a few minutes afterwards the sandy bank of the river was strewn with an immense variety of small fish, among which were a few of a larger kind. Martin and Barney became excited as they saw them leaping and spluttering about, and ran in amongst them to assist in gathering them into baskets. But scarcely had the latter advanced a few steps when there was a loud report, as if a pistol had gone off under his feet.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the Irishman, leaping two feet into the air. On his reaching the ground again a similar explosion occurred, and Barney dashed aside, overturning Martin in his haste. Martin's heel caught on a stone, and he fell flat on the ground, when instantly

there was a report as if he had fallen upon and burst an inflated paper bag. The natives laughed loud and long, while the unfortunate couple sprang up the bank, half inclined to think that an earthquake was about to take place. The cause of their fright was then pointed out. It was a species of small fish which has the power of inflating the fore part of its body into a complete ball, and which, when stamped upon, explodes with a loud noise. There were great numbers of these scattered among the other fish, and also large quantities of a little fish armed with long spines, which inflict a serious wound when trodden upon.

At this place adventures on a small scale crowded upon our travellers so thickly that Martin began to look upon sudden surprises as a necessary of life, and Barney said that "if it wint on any longer he feared his eyebrows would get fixed near the top of his head, and niver more come down."

One evening, soon after their departure from the residence of Senhor Antonio, the old trader was sitting steering in the stern of his canoe, which was running up before a pretty stiff breeze. Martin was lying on his back, as was his wont in such easy circumstances, amusing himself with Marmoset, and Barney was reclining in the bow talking solemnly to Grampus, when suddenly the wind ceased and it became a dead calm. The current was so strong that they could scarcely paddle against it, so they resolved to go no further that night, and ran the canoe ashore on a low point of mud, intending to encamp under the trees, no human habitation being near them. The mud-bank was hard and dry, and cracked with the heat, for it was now the end of the dry season, and the river had long since retired from it.

"Not a very comfortable place, Barney," said Martin looking round as he threw down one of the bales which he had just carried up from the canoe. "Hallo! there's a hut, I declare. Come that's a comfort anyhow."

As he spoke Martin pointed to one of the solitary and rudely-constructed huts or sheds which the natives of the banks of the Amazon sometimes erect during the dry season and forsake when the river overflows its banks. The hut was a very old one, and had evidently been inundated, for the floor was a mass of dry, solid mud, and the palm-leaf roof was much damaged. However, it was better than nothing, so they slung their hammocks under it, kindled a fire, and prepared supper. While they were busy discussing this meal, a few dark and ominous clouds gathered in the sky, and the old trader, glancing uneasily about him, gave them to understand that he feared the rainy season was going to begin.

"Well, then," said Barney, lighting his pipe and stretching himself at full length in his hammock, with a leg swinging to and fro over one side and his head leaning over the other, as was his wont when he felt particularly comfortable in mind and body—"well then, avic, let it begin. If we're sure to have it anyhow, the sooner it begins the better, to my thinkin'."

"I don't know that," said Martin, who was seated on a large stone beside the fire sipping a can of coffee, which he shared equally with Marmoset. The monkey sat on his shoulder gazing anxiously into his face, with an expression that seemed as if the creature were mentally exclaiming, "Now me, now you; now me, now you," during the



An Intruder.

whole process. "It would be better, I think, if we were in a more sheltered position before it begins. Ha ! there it comes though, in earnest."

A smart shower began to fall as he spoke, and percolating through the old roof, descended rather copiously on the mud floor. In a few minutes there was a heaving of the ground under their feet !

"Ochone !" cried Barney, taking his pipe out of his mouth and looking down with a disturbed expression, "there's an arthquake, I do belave."

For a few seconds there was a dead silence.

"Nonsense," whispered Martin uneasily.

"It's dramin' I must have been," sighed Barney, resuming his pipe.

Again the ground heaved and cracked, and Martin and the old trader had just time to spring to their feet when the mud floor of the hut burst upwards and a huge dried-up-looking alligator crawled forth, as if from the bowels of the earth ! It glanced up at Barney, opened its tremendous jaws, and made as if it would run at the terrified old trader ; then, observing the doorway, it waddled out and, trundling down the bank, plunged into the river and disappeared.

Barney could find no words to express his feelings, but continued to gaze with an unbelieving expression down into the hole out of which the monster had come, and in which it had buried itself many weeks before, when the whole country was covered with soft mud. At that time it had probably regarded the shelter of the inundated hut as of some advantage, and had lain down to repose. The water retiring had left it there buried, and—as we have already mentioned in reference to alligators—when the first shower of the rainy season fell it was led by instinct to burst its earthy prison and seek its native element.

Before Barney or his companions could recover from their surprise, they had other and more urgent matters to think about. The dark clouds burst overhead, and the rain descended like a continued water-spout—not in drops, but in heavy sheets and masses. The roof of the hut gave way in several places, driving them into a corner for shelter ; the river began to rise rapidly, soon flooding the hut ; and when darkness overspread the land, they found themselves drenched to the skin and suspended in their hammocks over a running stream of water !

This event brought about an entire change in the aspect of nature, and was the cause of a sad and momentous era in the adventures of Martin Rattler and his companion.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Gapo—Interruptions—Grampus and Marmoset—Canoeing in the woods—A night on a floating island.

THERE is a peculiar and very striking feature in the character of the great Amazon, which affects the distinctive appearance of that river and materially alters the manners and customs of those who dwell beside it. This peculiarity is the periodical overflow of its low banks ; and the part thus overflowed is called the *Gapo*. It extends from a little above the town of Santarem up to the confines of Peru, a distance of about seventeen hundred miles, and varies in width from one to twenty miles ; so that the country when inundated assumes

in many places the appearance of an extensive lake with forest trees growing out of the water, and travellers may proceed many hundreds of miles in their canoes without once entering the main stream of the river. At this time the natives become almost aquatic animals. Several tribes of Indians inhabit the Gapo, such as the Purupurus, Muras, and others. They build small movable huts on the sandy shores during the dry season, and on rafts in the wet. They subsist on turtle, cow-fish, and the other fish with which the river abounds, and live almost entirely in their canoes; while at night they frequently sling their hammocks between the branches of trees and sleep suspended over the deep water.

Some of the animals found in the Gapo are peculiar to it, being attracted to it by the fruit trees which are found growing only there. The Indians assert that every tree that grows in the Gapo is distinct from all those that grow in other districts; and when we consider that these trees are submerged for six months every year, till they are tall enough to rise above the highest water-level, we may well believe their constitution is somewhat different from those that are reared on ordinary ground. The Indians are wonderfully expert in finding their way among the trackless mazes of the Gapo, being guided by the broken twigs and scraped bark that indicate the route followed by previous travellers.

Owing to this sudden commencement of the rainy season, the old trader resolved to return to a small village and there spend several months. Martin and Barney were much annoyed at this; for the former was impatient to penetrate farther into the interior; and the latter had firmly made up his mind to visit the diamond mines, about which he entertained the most extravagant notions. He did not, indeed, know in the least how to get to these mines, not even in which direction they lay; but he had a strong impression that as long as he continued travelling he was approaching gradually nearer to them, and he had no doubt whatever that he would get to them at last. It was therefore with no small degree of impatience that they awaited the pleasure of their sable master, who explained to them that when the waters reached their height he would proceed.

Everything comes to an end, even a long story, after many weeks had passed slowly by, their sojourn in this village came to an end too. It was a dull place, very dull, and they had nothing to do; and the few poor people who lived there seemed to have very little or nothing to do. We will therefore pass it over, and resume our narrative at the point when the old trader announced to Barney that the flood was at its height and they would now continue their journey. They embarked once more in their old canoe with their goods and chattels, not forgetting Marmoset and Grampus, whose friendship during their inactive life had become more close than ever. This friendship was evidenced chiefly by the matter-of-course way in which Grampus permitted the monkey to mount his back and ride about the village and through the woods, where dry places could be found as long as she pleased. Marmoset was fonder of riding than walking, so that Grampus had enough to do; but he did not put himself much about. He trotted, walked, galloped, and lay down when and where and as often as he chose, without any reference to the small monkey; and Marmoset held on through thick and thin, and nibbled nuts or whatever else it picked up, utterly regardless of where it was going to or



The Floating Island.

the pace at which it went. It was sharp, though, that small monkey, sharp as a needle, and had its little black eyes glancing on all sides ; so that when Grampus dashed through underwood, and the branches threatened to sweep it off, it ducked its head, or, lying flat down, shut its eyes and held on with all its teeth and four hands like a limpet to a rock. Marmoset was not careful as to her attitude on dog-back. She sat with her face to the front or the rear, just as her fancy or convenience dictated.

After leaving the village they travelled for many days and nights through the Gapo. Although afloat on the waters of the Amazon, they never entered the main river after the first few days, but wound their way, in a creeping, serpentine sort of fashion, through small streams and lakes and swamps, from which the light was partially excluded by the thick foliage of the forest. It was a strange scene that illimitable watery waste, and aroused new sensations in the breasts of our travellers. As Barney said, it made him "feel quite solemn-like and eerie to travel through the woods by wather."

The canoe was forced under branches and among dense bushes till they got into a part where the trees were loftier and a deep gloom prevailed. Here the lowest branches were on a level with the surface of the water, and many of them were putting forth beautiful flowers. On one occasion they came to a grove of small palms, which were so deep in the water that the leaves were only a few feet above the surface. Indeed, they were so low that one of them caught Martin's straw hat and swept it overboard.

"Hallo ! stop !" cried Martin, interrupting the silence so suddenly that Grampus sprang up with a growl, under the impression that game was in view, and Marmoset scampered off behind a packing-box with an angry shriek.

"What's wrong, lad ?" inquired Barney.

"Back water, quick ! my hat's overboard, and there's an alligator going to snap it up. Look alive, man !"

In a few seconds the canoe was backed and the straw-hat rescued from its perilous position.

"It's an ill wind that blows nae guid, as the Scotch say," remarked Barney, rising in the canoe and reaching towards something among the overhanging branches. "Here's wan o' them trees that old black-face calls a maraja, with some splendid bunches o' fruit on it. Hould yer hat, Martin ; there's more nor enough for supper anyhow."

As he spoke, a rustling in the leaves told that monkeys were watching them, and Marmoset kept peeping up as if she half expected they might be relations. But the moment the travellers caught sight of them they bounded away screaming.

Having gathered as much fruit as they required, they continued their voyage, and presently emerged into the pleasant sunshine in a large grassy lake, which was filled with lilies and beautiful water-plants, little yellow bladder-worts, with several other plants of which they knew not the names, especially one with a thick swollen stalk, curious leaves, and bright-blue flowers. This lake was soon passed, and they again entered into the gloomy forest, and paddled among the lofty trunks of the trees, which rose like massive columns out of the deep water. There was enough of animal life there, however, to amuse and interest them. The constant splash of falling fruit showed that birds were feeding overhead. Sometimes a flock of

parrots or bright-blue chatterers swept from tree to tree, or a trogon swooped at a falling bunch of fruit and caught it ere it reached the water; while ungainly toucans plumped clumsily down upon the branches, and sat, in striking contrast, beside the lovely pompadours, with their claret-coloured plumage and delicate white wings.

Vieng with these birds in splendour were several large bright-yellow flowers of the creeping-plants which twined round the trees. Some of these plants had white, spotted, and purple blossoms; and there was one splendid species, called by the natives the *flor de Santa Anna*—the flower of St. Ann—which emitted a delightful odour, and was four inches in diameter.

Having traversed this part of the wood, they once more emerged upon the main stream of the Amazon. It was covered with water-fowl. Large logs of trees and numerous floating islands of grass were sailing down; and on these sat hundreds of white gulls, demurely and comfortably voyaging to the ocean, for the sea would be their final resting-place if they sat on these logs and islands until they descended several hundreds of miles of the great river.

"I wish," said Martin, after a long silence, during which the travellers had been gazing on the watery waste as they paddled up stream—"I wish that we could fall in with solid land, where we might have something cooked. I'm desperately hungry now; but I don't see a spot of earth large enough for a mosquito to rest his foot on."

"We'll jist have to take to farhina and wather," remarked Barney, laying down his paddle and proceeding leisurely to light his pipe. "It's a blissin' we've got baccy, anyhow. 'Tis meself that could nivr git on without it."

"I wish you joy of it, Barney. It may fill your mouth, but it can't stop your hunger."

"Och, boy, it's little ye know. Sure it stops the cravin's o' hunger, and kapes yer stumick from callin' out for iver, till ye fall in with somethin' to ate."

"It does not seem to stop the mouth, then, Barney, for you call out for grub oftener than I do. And then you say that you couldn't get on without it, so you're a slave to it, old boy. I wouldn't be a slave to anything if I could help it."

"Martin, lad, ye're gittin' deep. Take care now, or ye'll be in mettlefeesics soon.—I say, ould black-face,"—Barney was not on ceremony with the old trader,—"*is there no land in thim parts at all?*"

"No, not dis night."

"Och, then, we'll have to git up a tree and try to cook somethin' there, for I'm not goin' to work on flour and wather. Hallo! hould on! There's an island, or the portrait o' wan. Port your helm, Naygur! hard aport! Dy'e hear?"

The old man heard, but, as usual, paid no attention to the Irishman's remarks, and the canoe would have passed straight on, had not Barney used his bow-paddle so energetically that he managed to steer her, as he expressed it, by the nose, and ran her against a mass of floating logs which had caught firmly in a thicket, and were so covered with grass and broken twigs as to have very much the appearance of a real island. Here they landed, so to speak, kindled a small fire, made some coffee, roasted a few fish, baked several cakes,

and were soon as happy and comfortable as hungry and wearied men usually are when they obtain rest and food.

"This is what I call jolly," remarked Barney.

"What's jolly?" inquired Martin.

"Why, *this*, to be sure—grub to begin with, and a smoke and a convenient snooze in prospect."

The hopes which Barney cherished, however, were destined to be blighted, at least in part. To the victuals he did ample justice; the pipe was delightful and in good working order; but when they lay down to repose, they were attacked by swarms of stinging ants, which the heat of the fire had driven out of the old logs. These and mosquitoes effectually banished sleep from their eyelids, and caused them to reflect very seriously, and to state to each other more than once very impressively, that, with all their beauties and wonders, tropical lands had their disadvantages, and there was no place like the "ould country" after all.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The sad and momentous era referred to at the close of the chapter preceding the last.

ONE sultry evening, many weeks after our travellers had passed the uncomfortable night on the floating island in the Gapo, they came to a place where the banks of the river rose boldly up in rugged rocks and hemmed in the waters of the Amazon, which were by this time somewhat abated. Here they put ashore, intending to kindle their fire and encamp for the night, having been up and hard at work since daybreak.

The evening was calm and beautiful, and the troublesome insects not so numerous as usual—probably owing to the nature of the ground. One or two monkeys showed themselves for a moment, as if to inquire who was there, and then ran away screaming; a porcupine also crossed their path, and several small bright snakes, of a harmless species, glided over the rocks, and sought refuge among the small bushes; but beyond these there were few of the sights and sounds that were wont to greet them in the forest.

"I think things look well to-night," remarked Martin, as he threw down a bundle of sticks which he had gathered for the fire, "we shall have a comfortable snooze for certain, if the mosquitoes don't wake up."

"I'm not so sure of that," remarked Barney, striking a light with flint and steel, and stopped to puff a smouldering spark into a flame. "I've larned by experiance that ye niver can be"—puff—"sure o, nothin' in this"—puff—"remarkable country. Jist look at Darkey now," continued the Irishman, sitting down on a stone before the fire, which now began to kindle up, and stuffing the tobacco into his pipe with his little finger. "There he is, a livin' Naygur, aliftin' of the provision-bag out o' the canoe. Well, if he was all of a suddent to turn into Marmoset an' swaller himself, an' then jump down the throat of Grampus, and the whole consarn, canoe and all, to disappear, I don't think that I would be much surprised."

"Would you not, Barney? I suspect that I should be a little, under the circumstances; perhaps the old Nigger would be more so."

"Niver a taste," continued Barney. "Ye see, if that was to

happen, I would then know that it was all a drame. I've more than wance expected to wake up since I comed into furrin parts ; the only thing that kapes me in doubt about it is the baccy."

"How so, Barney !"

"Why, bekase it tastes so rael, good luck to it ! that I can't git myself to think it's only a drame. Jist look, now," he continued, in the same tene of voice ; "if it wasn't a drame, how could I see sich a thing as that standin' on the rock over there ?"

Martin glanced towards the spot pointed out by his friend, and immediately started up with surprise.

"Hallo, Barney ! that's no dream, I'll vouch for it. He's an Indian, and a very ugly one, too, I declare.—I say, old fellow, do you know what sort of savage that is ?"

"Not know," answered the trader, glancing uneasily at the stranger.

"He might have the dacency to put on more cloes, anyhow," muttered Barney, as he glanced inquiringly at the savage.

The being who had thus appeared so suddenly before the travellers belonged to one of the numerous tribes of Indians inhabiting the country near the head-waters of some of the chief tributaries of the Amazon. He was almost entirely naked, having merely a scanty covering on his loins, and carried a small quiver full of arrows at his back, and what appeared to be a long spear in his hand. His figure was strongly but not well formed, and his face which was of a dark copper hue, was disfigured in a most remarkable manner. A mass of coarse black hair formed the only covering to his head. His cheeks were painted with curious marks of jet black. But the most remarkable points about him were the huge pieces of wood which formed ornaments in his ears and under lip. They were round and flat, like the wooden wheel of a toy-cart, about half an inch thick, and larger than an old-fashioned watch. These were fitted into enormous slits made in the ears and under-lip, and the latter projected more than two inches from his mouth ! Indeed, the cut that had been made to receive this ornament was so large that the lip had almost been cut off altogether, and merely hung by each corner of his mouth ! The aspect of the man was very hideous, and it was by no means improved when, having recovered from his surprise at unexpectedly encountering strangers, he opened his mouth to the full extent and uttered a savage yell.

The cry was answered immediately. In a few minutes a troop of upwards of thirty savages sprang from the woods, and ascending the rock on which their comrade stood, gazed down on the travellers in surprise, and, by their movements, seemed to be making hasty preparations for an attack.

By this time Barney had recovered his self-possession, and became thoroughly convinced of the reality of the apparition before him. Drawing his pistol hastily from his belt, he caught up a handful of gravel, wherewith he loaded it to the muzzle, ramming down the charge with a bit of mandioca cake in lieu of a wad ; then drawing his cutlass he handed it to Martin, exclaiming, "Come, lad ; we're in for it now. Take you the cutlass, and I'll try their skulls with the butt o' my pistol ; it has done good work before now in that way. If there's no more o' the blackguards in the background, we'll bate them aisy."

Martin instinctively grasped the cutlass, and there is no doubt

that, under the impulse of that remarkable quality, British valour, which utterly despises odds, they would have hurled themselves recklessly upon the savages, when the horrified old traders threw himself on Barney's neck and implored him not to fight ; for if he did they would all be killed, and if he only kept quiet the savages would perhaps do them no harm. At the same moment about fifty additional Indians arrived upon the scene of action. This, and the old man's earnest entreaties, induced them to hesitate for an instant, and before they could determine what to do, they were surprised by some of the savages, who rushed upon them from behind and took them prisoners. Barney struggled long and fiercely, but he was at length overpowered by numbers. The pistol, which missed fire, was wrenched from his grasp, and his hands were speedily bound behind his back. Martin was likewise disarmed and secured ; not, however, before he made a desperate slash at one of the savages, which narrowly missed his skull, and cut away his lip ornament.

As for the old trader, he made no resistance at all, but submitted quietly to his fate. The savages did not seem to think it worth their while to bind him. Grampus bounced and barked round the party savagely, but did not attack ; and Marmoset slept in the canoe in blissful ignorance of the whole transaction.

The hands of the two prisoners being firmly bound they were allowed to do as they pleased ; so they sat down on a rock in gloomy silence, and watched the naked savages as they rifled the canoe and danced joyfully round the treasures which their active knives and fingers soon exposed to view. The old trader took things philosophically. Knowing that it was absolutely impossible to escape, he sat quietly down on a stone rested his chin on his hands, heaved one or two deep sighs, and thereafter seemed to be nothing more than an ebony statue.

The ransacking of the canoe and appropriating of its contents occupied the savages but a short time, after which they packed everything up in small bundles, which they strapped upon their backs. Then, making signs to their prisoners to rise, they all marched away into the forest. Just as they were departing, Marmoset, observing that she was about to be left behind, uttered a frantic cry, which brought Grampus gambolling to her side. With an active bound the monkey mounted its charger, and away they went into the forest in the track of the band of savages.

During the first part of their march Martin and Barney were permitted to walk beside each other, and they conversed in low, anxious tones.

"Surely," said Barney, as they marched along surrounded by Indians, "thim long poles the savages have got are not spears ; I don't see no point to them."

"And what's more remarkable," added Martin, "is that they all carry quivers full of arrows, but none of them have bows."

"There's a raison of iverything," said Barney, pointing to one of the Indians in advance ; "that fellow explains the mystery."

As he spoke, the savage referred to lowered the pole, which seemed to be about thirteen feet long, and pushing an arrow into a hole in the end of it, applied it to his mouth. In another moment the arrow flew through the air and grazed a bird that was sitting on a branch hard by.

"'Tis a blow-pipe, and no mistake!" cried Barney.

"And a poisoned arrow, I'm quite sure," added Martin; "for it only ruffled the bird's feathers, and see, it has fallen to the ground."

"Och, then, but we'd have stood a bad chance in a fight, if thim's the wipons they use. Och, the dirty spalpeens! Martin, dear, we're done for. There's no chance for us at all."

This impression seemed to take such deep hold of Barney's mind, that his usually reckless and half-jesting disposition was completely subdued, and he walked along in gloomy silence, while a feeling of deep dejection filled the heart of his young companion.

The blow-pipe which these Indians use is an ingeniously contrived weapon. It is made from a species of palm-tree. When an Indian wants one, he goes into the woods and selects a tree with a long slender stem of less than an inch in diameter. He extracts the pith out of this; and then cuts another stem, so much larger than the first that he can push the small tube into the bore of the large one—thus the slight bend in one is counteracted by the other, and a perfectly straight pipe is formed. The mouthpiece is afterwards neatly finished off. The arrows used are very short, having a little ball of cotton at the end to fill the tube of the blow-pipe. The points are dipped in a peculiar poison, which has the effect of producing death when introduced into the blood by a mere scratch of the skin. The Indians can send these arrows an immense distance, and with unerring aim, as Martin and Barney had many an opportunity of witnessing during their long and weary journey on foot to the forest-home of the savages.

CHAPTER XIX.

Worse and worse—Everything seems to go wrong together.

ALTHOUGH the Indians did not maltreat the unfortunate strangers who had thus fallen into their hands, they made them proceed by forced marches through the wilderness; and as neither Barney nor Martin had been of late much used to long walks, they felt the journey very severely. The old trader had been accustomed to everything wretched and unfortunate and uncomfortable from his childhood, so he plodded onward in silent indifference.

The country through which they passed became every day more and more rugged, until at length it assumed the character of a wild mountainous district. Sometimes they wound their way in a zigzag manner up the mountain sides, by paths so narrow that they could scarcely find a foothold. At other times they descended into narrow valleys where they saw great numbers of wild animals of various kinds, some of which the Indians killed for food. After they reached the mountain district they loosed the hands of their prisoners, in order to enable them to climb more easily. Indeed in many places they had to scramble so carefully that it would have been impossible for any one to climb with his hands tied behind his back. But the Indians knew full well that they ran no risk of losing their prisoners; for if they had attempted to escape, dozens of their number were on the watch, before, behind, and on either side, ready to dart away in pursuit. Moreover, Barney had a feeling of horror at the bare idea

of the poisoned arrows, that effectually prevented him from making the smallest attempt at escape. With a cutlass or a heavy stick he would have attacked the whole tribe single-handed, and have fought till his brains were knocked out ; but when he thought of the small arrows that would pour upon him in hundreds if he made a dash for the woods, and certain death that would follow the slightest scratch, he discarded all idea of rebellion.

One of the animals killed by the Indians at this time was a black jaguar—a magnificent animal, and very fierce. He was discovered crouching in a thicket backed by a precipice, from which he could only escape by charging through the ranks of his enemies. He did it nobly. With a roar that rebounded from the face of the high cliff and echoed through the valley like a peal of thunder, he sprang out and rushed at the savages in front, who scattered like chaff right and left. But at the same instant fifty blow-pipes sent their poisoned shafts into his body, and, after a few convulsive bounds, the splendid monarch of the American forests fell dead on the ground. The black jaguar is a somewhat rare animal, and is very seldom seen. This one was therefore hailed as a great prize, and the skin and claws were carefully preserved.

On the afternoon of the same day the party came to a broad stream, over which they, or some other of the numerous tribes in the country, had constructed a very simple and curious bridge. It was a single rope attached to an immense mass of rock on one side and to the stem of a large tree on the other. On this tight-rope was fastened a simple loop of cord, so constructed that it could encircle the waist of a man and at the same time traverse from one end of the tight-rope to the other. Barney put on a comical frown when he came to this and saw the leader of the party rest his weight on the loop, and, clinging with hands and legs to the long rope, work himself slowly across.

"Arrah ! it's well for us, Martin, that we're used to goin' aloft," said he, "or that same bridge would try our narves a little."

"So it would, Barney. I've seldom seen a more uncomfortable-looking contrivance. If we lost our hold we should first be dashed to pieces on the rocks, and then be drowned in the river."

Difficult though the passage seemed, however, it was soon accomplished by the active savages in safety. The only one of the party likely to be left behind was Grampius ; whom his master, after much entreaty in dumb-show, was permitted to carry over by tying him firmly to his shoulders. Marmoset crossed over walking, like a tight-rope dancer, being quite *au fait* at such work. Soon after they came to another curious bridge over a ravine. It had been constructed by simply falling two tall trees on the edge of it in such a manner that they fell across. They were bound together with the supple vines that grew there in profusion. Nature had soon covered them over with climbing-plants and luxuriant verdure ; and the bridge had become a broad and solid structure over which the whole party marched with perfect ease. Several such bridges were crossed, and also a few of the rope kind, during the journey.

After a week's constant travelling, the Indians came to a beautiful valley one evening just about sunset, and began to make the usual preparations for encamping. The spot they selected was a singular one. It was at the foot of a rocky gorge, up which might be seen

trees and bushes mingled with jagged rocks and dark caverns, with a lofty sierra or mountain range in the background. In front was the beautiful valley which they had just crossed. On a huge rock there grew a tree of considerable size, the roots of which projected beyond the rock several yards, and then, bending downwards, struck into the ground. Creeping-plants had twined quickly among the roots, and thus formed a sort of lattice-work which enclosed a large space of ground. In this natural arbour the chiefs of the Indians took up their quarter, and kindled their fire in the centre of it, while the main body of the party pitched their camp outside. The three prisoners were allotted a corner in the arbour; and, after having supped, they spread their ponchos on a pile of ferns, and found themselves very snug indeed.

"Martin," said Barney gravely, as he smoked his pipe and patted the head of his dog, "d'ye know I'm beginning to feel tired o' the company o' thim naked rascals, and I've been revolv'in' in my mind what we should do to escape. Moreover, I've comed to a conclusion."

"And what's that?" inquired Martin.

"That it's imposs'ble to escape at all, and I don't know what to do."

"That's not a satisfactory conclusion, Barney. I, too, have been cogitating a good deal about these Indians, and it is my opinion that they have been on a war expedition, for I've noticed that several of them have been wounded; and, besides, I cannot fancy what else could take them so far from home.

"True, Martin, true. I wonder what they intind to do with us. They don't mean to kill us, anyhow, for if they did they would niver take the trouble to bring us here. Ochone! me heart's beginnin' to go down altogether, for we are miles and miles away from anywhere now, and I don't know the direction o' no place whatsumdiver."

"Never mind, Barney, cheer up," said Martin with a smile; "if they don't kill us, that's all we need care about. I'm sure we shall manage to escape somehow or other in the long run."

While they thus conversed the old trader spread his poncho over himself and was soon sound asleep; while the Indians, after finishing supper, held an animated conversation. At times they seemed to be disputing, and spoke angrily and with violent gesticulations, glancing now and then at the corner where their prisoners lay.

"It's my belafe," whispered Barney, "that they're spakin' about us. I'm afear'd they don't mean us any good. Och, but if I wance had my pistol and the ould cutlass. Well, well, it's no manner o' use frettin'. Good-night, Martin, good-night."

The Irishman knocked the ashes out of his pipe, turned his face to the wall, and, heaving a deep sigh, speedily forgot his cares in sleep. The Indians also lay down, the camp-fires died slowly out, and the deep breathing of the savages alone betokened the presence of man in that lone wilderness.

Barney's forebodings proved to be only too well founded, for next morning, instead of pursuing their way together, as usual, the savages divided their forces into two separate bands, placing the Irishman and the old trader in the midst of one, and Martin Rattler with the other.

"Surely they're niver goin' to part us, Martin," said Barney with a care-worn expression on his honest countenance that indicated the anxious suspicions in his heart.

"I fear it much," said Martin with a startled look, as he watched the proceedings of the Indians. "We must fight now, Barney, if we should die for it. We *must* not be separated."

Martin spoke with intense fervour, and gazed anxiously in the face of his friend. A dark frown had gathered there. The sudden prospect of being forcibly torn from his young companion, whom he regarded with almost a mother's tenderness, stirred his enthusiastic and fiery temperament to its centre, and he gazed wildly about, as if for some weapon. But the savages anticipated his intention. Ere he could grasp any offensive weapon two of their number leaped upon him, and at the same moment Martin's arms were pinioned in a powerful grasp.

"Och, ye murderin' blackguards!" cried Barney, hitting out right and left and knocking down a savage at each blow, "now or niver! come on, ye kangaroos!"

A general rush was made upon the Irishman, who was fairly overthrown by the mass of men. Martin struggled fiercely to free himself, and would have succeeded had not two powerful Indians hastened to the help of the one who had first seized him. Despite his frantic efforts, he was dragged forcibly up the mountain gorge, the echoes of which rang with his cries as he shouted despairingly the name of his friend. Barney fought like a tiger, but he could make no impression on such numbers. Although at least a dozen Indians lay around him bleeding and stunned by the savage blows of his fists—a species of warfare which was entirely new to them—fresh savages crowded round. But they did not wish to kill him, and numerous though they were they found it no easy matter to secure so powerful a man; and when Martin turned a last despairing glance towards the camp, ere a turn in the path shut it out from view, the hammer-like fists of his comrade were still smashing down the naked creatures who danced like monkeys round him, and the warlike shouts of his stentorian voice reverberated among the cliffs and caverns of the mountain pass long after he was hid from view.

Thus Martin and Barney were separated in the wild regions near the Sierra dos Parecis of Brazil.

CHAPTER XX.

Martin reflects much, and forms a firm resolve—The Indian village.

WHEN the mind has been overwhelmed by some sudden and terrible calamity, it is long ere it again recovers its wonted elasticity. An aching void seems to exist in the heart, and a dead weight appears to press upon the brain, so that ordinary objects make but little impression, and the soul seems to turn inwards and brood drearily upon itself. The spirit of fun and frolic, that had filled Martin Rattler's heart ever since he landed in Brazil, was now so thoroughly and rudely crushed that he felt as if it were utterly impossible that he should ever smile again.

He had no conception of the strength of his affection for the rough hearty sailor who had until now been the faithful and good-humoured companion of his wanderings. As Barney had himself said on a former occasion, his life up till this period had been a pleasant and exciting dream. But he was now rudely awakened to the terrible

reality of his forlorn position ; and the more he thought of it the more hopeless and terrible it appeared to be.

He knew not in what part of Brazil he was ; he was being hurried apparently deeper into these vast solitudes by savages who were certainly not friendly, and of whose language he knew not a word ; and, worst of all, he was separated, perhaps for ever, from the friend on whom, all unconsciously to himself, he had so long leaned for support in all their difficulties and dangers. Even though he and Barney should succeed in escaping from the Indians, he felt—and his heart was overwhelmed at the thought—that in such a vast country there was not the shadow of a chance that they should find each other. Under the deep depression produced by these thoughts Martin wandered on wearily, as if in a dream, taking no interest in anything that occurred by the way. At length, after several days' fatiguing journey over mountains and plains, they arrived at the Indian village.

Here the warriors were received with the utmost joy by the wives and children whom they had left behind, and for a long time Martin was left almost entirely to do as he pleased. A few days before, his bonds had been removed, and once or twice he thought of attempting to escape ; but whenever he wandered a little further than usual into the woods, he found that he was watched and followed by a tall and powerful savage, whose duty it evidently was to see that the prisoner did not escape. The fearful idea now entered Martin's mind that he was reserved for torture, and perhaps a lingering death ; for he had read that many savage nations treated their prisoners in this cruel manner, for the gratification of the women who had lost relations in the war. But as no violence was offered to him in the meantime, and he had as much farina and fruit to eat as he could use, his mind gradually became relieved, and he endeavoured as much as possible to dismiss the terrible thought altogether.

The Indian village occupied a lovely situation at the base of a gentle hill or rising ground, the summit of which was clothed with luxuriant trees and shrubs. The huts were of various shapes and sizes, and very simple in construction. They were built upon the bare ground. Some were supported by four corner posts, twelve or fifteen feet high, and from thirty to forty feet long, the walls being made of thin laths connected with wicker-work and plastered with clay. The doors were made of palm-leaves, and the roofs were covered with the same material, or with maize straw. Other huts were made almost entirely of palm-leaves and were tent-shaped in form ; and, while a few were enclosed by walls, the most of the square ones had one or more sides entirely open. In the large huts several families dwelt together, and each family had a hearth and a portion of the floor allotted to it. The smoke from their fires was allowed to find its way out by the doors and chinks in the roofs, as no chimneys were constructed for its egress.

The furniture of each hut was very simple. It consisted of a few earthen pots ; baskets made of palm-leaves, which were filled with Spanish potatoes, maize, mandioca roots, and various kinds of wild fruits ; one or two drinking vessels ; the hollow trunk of a tree, used for pounding maize ; and several dishes which contained the colours used by the Indians in painting their naked bodies—a custom which was very prevalent amongst them. Besides these things, their were

bows, arrows, spears, and blow-pipes in abundance ; and hammocks hung from various posts, elevated about a foot from the ground. These hammocks were made of cotton cords, and served the purpose of tables, chairs, and beds.

The ground in the immediate neighbourhood of the village was laid out in patches, in which were cultivated mandioca roots, maize, and other plants useful for domestic purposes. In front of the village there was an extensive valley, through which a small river gurgled with a pleasant sound. It was hemmed in on all sides by wooded mountains, and was so beautifully diversified by scattered clusters of palms, and irregular patches of undulating grassy plains all covered with a rich profusion of tropical flowers and climbing plants, that it seemed to Martin more like a magnificent garden than the uncultivated forest—only far more rich and lovely and picturesque than any artificial garden could possibly be. When the sun shone in full splendour on this valley—as it almost always did—it seemed as if the whole landscape were on the point of bursting into flames of red and blue, and green and gold ; and when Martin sat under the shade of a tamarind tree and gazed long upon the enchanting scene, his memory often reverted to the Eden of which he used to read in the Bible at home, and he used to wonder if it were possible that the sun and flowers and trees *could* be more lovely in the time when Adam walked with God in Paradise.

Martin was young then, and he did not consider, although he afterwards came to know, that it was not the beauty of natural objects, but the presence and favour of God and the absence of sin, that rendered the Garden of Eden a paradise. But these thoughts always carried him back to dear old Aunt Dorothy and the sweet village of Ashford ; and the Brazilian paradise was not unfrequently obliterated in tears while he gazed, and turned into a vale of weeping. Ay, he would have given that magnificent valley—had it been his own—ten times over, in exchange for one more glance at the loved faces and the green fields of home.

Soon after his arrival at the Indian village Martin was given to understand, by signs, that he was to reside with a particular family, and work every day in the maize and mandioca fields, besides doing a great deal of the drudgery of the hut ; so that he now knew he was regarded as a slave by the tribe into whose hands he had fallen. It is impossible to express the bitterness of his feelings at this discovery, and for many weeks he went about his work scarcely knowing what he did, and caring little, when the hot sun beat on him so fiercely that he could hardly stand, whether he lived or died. At length, however, he made up his mind firmly to attempt his escape. He was sitting beneath the shade of his favourite resort, the tamarind tree, when he made this resolve. Longing thoughts of home had been strong upon him all that day, and desire for the companionship of Barney had filled his heart to bursting ; so that the sweet evening sunshine and the beautiful vale over which his eyes wandered, instead of affording him pleasure, seemed but to mock his misery. It was a lesson that all must learn sooner or later, and one we would do well to think upon before we learn it, that sunshine in the soul is not dependent on the sunshine of this world ; and when once the clouds descend, the brightest beams of all that earth contains cannot pierce them. God alone can touch these dark clouds with the finger

of love and mercy, and say again, as he said of old, "Let there be light."

A firm purpose, formed with heart and will, is cheering and invigorating to a depressed mind. No sooner did the firm determination to escape or die enter into Martin's heart, than he sprang from his seat, and, falling on his knees, prayed to God, in the name of our Redeemer, for help and guidance. He had not the least idea of how he was to escape, or of what he intended to do. All he knew was that he had *made up his mind* to do so, *if God would help him*. And under the strength of that resolve he soon recovered much of his former cheerfulness of disposition, and did his work among the savages with a degree of energy that filled them with surprise and respect. From that day forth he never ceased to revolve in his mind every imaginable and unimaginable plan of escape, and to watch every event and circumstance, no matter how trifling, that seemed likely to aid him in his purpose.

Seeing that he was a very strong and active fellow, and that he had become remarkably expert in the use of the bow and the blow-pipe, the Indians now permitted Martin to accompany them frequently on their short hunting expeditions, so that he had many opportunities of seeing more of the wonderful animals and plants of the Brazilian forests, in the studying of which he experienced great delight. Moreover, in the course of a few months he began to acquire a smattering of the Indian language, and was not compelled to live in constant silence, as had been the case at first. But he carefully avoided the formation of any friendships with the youths of the tribe, although many of them seemed to desire it, considering that his doing so might in some way or other interfere with the execution of his great purpose. He was civil and kind to them all, however, though reserved; and, as time wore away, he enjoyed much more liberty than was the case at first. Still, however, he was watched by the tall savage, who was a surly, silent fellow, and would not be drawn into conversation. Indeed he did not walk with Martin, but followed him wherever he went, during his hours of leisure, at a distance of a few hundred yards, moving when his prisoner moved, and stopping when he halted, so that Martin at last began to regard him more as a shadow than a man.

CHAPTER XXI.

Savage feasts and ornaments—Martin grows desperate, and makes a bold attempt to escape

HUNTING and feasting were the chief occupations of the men of the tribe with whom Martin sojourned. One day Martin was told that a great feast was to take place, and he was permitted to attend. Accordingly, a little before the appointed time he hastened to the large hut in and around which the festivities were to take place, in order to witness the preparations.

The first thing that struck him was that there seemed to be no preparations making for eating; and on inquiry he was told that they did not meet to eat, they met to drink and dance—those who were hungry might eat at home. The preparations for drinking were made on an extensive scale by the women, a number of whom stood

round a large caldron, preparing its contents for use. These women wore very little clothing, and their bodies, besides being painted in a fantastic style, were also decorated with flowers and feathers. Martin could not help feeling that, however absurd the idea of painting the body was, it had at least the good effect of doing away to some extent with the idea of nakedness ; for the curious patterns and devices gave to the Indians the appearance of being clothed in tights—and, at any rate, he argued mentally, paint was better than nothing. Some of the flowers were artificially constructed out of beetles' wings, shells, fish-scales and feathers, and were exquisitely beautiful as well as gorgeous.

One of the younger women struck Martin as being ultra-fashionable in her paint. Her black shining hair hung like a cloak over her reddish-brown shoulders, and various strange drawings and figures ornamented her face and breast. On each cheek she had a circle, and over that two strokes. Under the nose were four red spots. From the corners of her mouth to the middle of each cheek were two parallel lines, and below these several upright stripes. On various parts of her back and shoulders were curiously entwined circles, and the form of a snake was depicted in vermilion down each arm. Unlike the others, she wore no ornament except a simple necklace of monkeys' teeth. This beauty was particularly active in manufacturing the intoxicating drink, which was prepared thus :—A quantity of maize was pounded in the hollow trunk of a tree, and put into an earthen pot, where it was boiled in a large quantity of water. Then the women took the coarsely-ground and boiled flour out of the water, chewed it in their mouths for a little, and put it into the pot again ! By this means the decoction began to ferment and became intoxicating. It was a very disgusting method ; yet it is practised by many Indian tribes in America, and, strange to say, also by some of the South Sea Islanders, who, of course, could not have learned it from these Indians.

When this beverage was ready, the chief, a tall, broad-shouldered man, whose painted costume and ornaments were most elaborate, stepped up to the pot and began a strange series of incantations, which he accompanied by rattling a small wooden instrument in his hand ; staring all the time at the earthen pot, as if he half expected it to run away, and dancing slowly round it, as if to prevent such a catastrophe from taking place. The oftener the song was repeated the more solemn and earnest became the expression of his face and the tones of his voice. The rest of the Indians, who were assembled to the number of several hundreds, stood motionless round the pot, staring at him intently without speaking, and only now and then, when the voice and actions of the chief became much excited, they gave vent to a sympathetic howl.

After this had gone on for some time, the chief seized a drinking-cup, or *cuja*, which he gravely dipped into the pot and took a sip. Then the shaking of the rattle and the monotonous song began again. The chief next took a good pull at the cup and emptied it ; after which he presented it to his companions, who helped themselves at pleasure ; and the dance and monotonous music became more furious and noisy the longer the cup went round.

When the cup had circulated pretty freely among them, their dances and music became more lively, but they were by no means

attractive. After he had watched them a short time, Martin left the festive scene with a feeling of pity for the poor savages, and as he thought upon their low and debased condition he recalled to mind the remark of his old friend the hermit—"They want the Bible in Brazil."

During his frequent rambles in the neighbourhood of the Indian village, Martin discovered many beautiful and retired spots, to which he was in the habit of going in the evenings after his daily labours were accomplished—accompanied, as usual, at a respectful distance, by his vigilant friend the tall savage. One of his favourite resting-places was at the foot of a banana tree which grew on the brow of a stupendous cliff about a mile distant from the hut in which he dwelt. From this spot he had a commanding view of the noble valley and the distant mountains. These mountains now seemed to the poor boy to be the ponderous gates of his beautiful prison, for he had been told by one of his Indian friends that on the other side of them were great campos and forests, beyond which dwelt many Portuguese, while still further on was a great lake without shores, which was the end of the world. This, Martin was convinced, must be the Atlantic Ocean, for, upon inquiry, he found that many months of travel must be undergone ere it could be reached. Moreover, he knew that it could not be the Pacific, because the sun rose in that direction.

Sauntering away to his favourite cliff, one fine evening towards sunset, he seated himself beneath the banana tree and gazed longingly at the distant mountains, whose sharp summits glittered in the ruddy glow. He had long racked his brain in order to devise some method of escape, but hitherto without success. Wherever he went the "shadow" followed him, armed with the deadly blow-pipe; and he knew that even if he did succeed in eluding his vigilance and escaping into the woods, hundreds of savages would turn out and track him, with unerring certainty, to any hiding-place. Still, the strength of his stern determination sustained him, and at each failure in his efforts to devise some means of effecting his purpose he threw off regret with a deep sigh, and returned to his labour with a firmer step, assured that he should eventually succeed.

As he sat there on the edge of the precipice he said, half aloud, "What prevents me from darting suddenly on that fellow and knocking him down?"

This was a question that might have been easily answered. No doubt he was physically capable of coping with the man, for he had now been upwards of a year in the wilderness, and was in his sixteenth year, besides being unusually tall and robust for his age. Indeed, he looked more like a full-grown man than a stripling, for hard, incessant toil had developed his muscles and enlarged his frame, and his stirring life, combined latterly with anxiety, had stamped a few of the lines of manhood on his sunburnt countenance. But, although he could have easily overcome the Indian, he knew that he would be instantly missed, and from what he had seen of the powers of the savages in tracking wild animals to their dens in the mountains, he felt that he could not possibly elude them except by stratagem.

Perplexed and wearied with unavailing thought and anxiety, Martin pressed his hands to his forehead and gazed down the perpendicular cliff, which was elevated fully a hundred feet above the

plain below. Suddenly he started, and clasped his hands upon his eyes, as if to shut out some terrible object from his sight. Then, creeping cautiously towards the edge of the cliff, he gazed down, while an expression of stern resolution settled upon his pale face.

And well might Martin's cheek blanch, for he had hit upon a plan of escape, which, to be successful, required that he should twice turn a bold, unflinching face on death. The precipice, as before mentioned, was fully a hundred feet high, and quite perpendicular. At the foot of it there flowed a deep and pretty wide stream, which, just under the spot where Martin stood, collected in a deep black pool, where it rested for a moment ere it rushed on its rapid course down the valley. Over the cliff and into that pool Martin made up his mind to plunge, and so give the impression that he had fallen over and been drowned. The risk he ran in taking such a tremendous leap was very great indeed, but that was only half the danger he must encounter.

The river was one of a remarkable kind, of which there are one or two instances in South America. It flowed down the valley between high rocks, and, a few hundred yards below the pool, it ran straight against the face of a precipice and there terminated to all appearance; but a gurgling vortex in the deep water at the base of the cliff, and the disappearance of everything that entered it, showed that the stream found a subterranean passage. There was no sign of its reappearance, however, in all the country round. In short, the river was lost in the bowels of the earth.

From the pool to the cliff where the river was engulfed the water ran like a mill-race, and there was no spot on either bank where any one could land, or even grasp with his hand, except one. It was a narrow, sharp rock that jutted out about two feet from the bank, quite close to the vortex of the whirlpool. This rock was Martin's only hope. To miss it would be certain destruction. But if he should gain a footing on it he knew that he could climb by a narrow fissure into a wild, cavernous spot, which it was exceedingly difficult to reach from any other point. A bend in the river concealed this rock and the vortex from the place whereon he stood, so that he hoped to be able to reach the point of escape before the savage could descend the slope and gain the summit of the cliff from whence it could be seen.

Of all this Martin was well aware, for he had been often at the place before, and knew every inch of the ground. His chief difficulty would be to leap over the precipice in such a manner as to cause the Indian to believe he had fallen over accidentally. If he could accomplish this, then he felt assured the savages would suppose he had been drowned, and so make no search for him at all. Fortunately the ground favoured this. About five feet below the edge of the precipice there was a projecting ledge of rock nearly four feet broad and covered with shrubs. Upon this it was necessary to allow himself to fall. The expedient was a desperate one, and he grew sick at heart as he glanced down the awful cliff, which seemed to him three times higher than it really was, as all heights do when seen from above.

Glancing round, he observed his savage guardian gazing contemplatively at the distant prospect. Martin's heart beat audibly as he rose and walked with an affectation of carelessness to the edge of the cliff. As he gazed down, a feeling of horror seized him; he gasped for

breath, and almost fainted. Then the idea of perpetual slavery flashed across his mind, and the thought of freedom and home nerved him. He clinched his hands, staggered convulsively forward, and fell, with a loud and genuine shriek of terror, upon the shrubs that covered the rocky ledge. Instantly he arose, ground his teeth together, raised his eyes for one moment to heaven, and sprang into the air. For one instant he swept through empty space, the next he was deep down in the waters of the dark pool; and when the horrified Indian reached the edge of the precipice, he beheld his prisoner struggling on the surface for a moment, ere he was swept by the rapid stream round the point and out of view.

Bounding down the slope, the savage sped like a hunted antelope across the intervening space between the two cliffs, and quickly gained the brow of the lower precipice, which he reached just in time to see Martin Rattler's straw hat dance for a moment on the troubled waters of the vortex and disappear in the awful abyss. But Martin saw it too, from the cleft in the frowning rock.

On reaching the surface after his leap he dashed the water from his eyes and looked with intense earnestness in the direction of the projecting rock towards which he was hurried. Down he came upon it with such speed that he felt no power of man could resist. But there was a small eddy just below it, into which he was whirled as he stretched forth his hand and clutched the rock with the energy of despair. He was instantly torn away. But another small point projected two feet below it. This he seized. The water swung his feet to and fro as it gushed into the vortex, but the eddy saved him. In a moment his breast was on the rock, then his foot, and he sprang into the sheltering cleft just a moment before the Indian came in view of the scene of his supposed death.

Martin flung himself with his face to the ground, and thought rather than uttered a heartfelt thanksgiving for his deliverance. The savage carried the news of his death to his friends in the Indian village, and recounted with deep solemnity the particulars of his awful fate to crowds of wondering—in many cases sorrowing listeners; and for many a day after that the poor savages were wont to visit the terrible cliff, and gaze with awe on the mysterious vortex that had swallowed up, as they believed, the fair-haired boy.

CHAPTER XXII.

*The escape—Alone in the wilderness—Fight between a jaguar and an alligator—
Martin encounters strange and terrible creatures.*

FREEDOM can be fully appreciated only by those who have been for a long period deprived of liberty. It is impossible to comprehend the feelings of joy that welled up in Martin's bosom as he clambered up the rugged cliffs among which he had found shelter, and looked round upon the beautiful valley, now lying in the shadow of the mountain range behind which the sun had just set. He sat down on a rock, regardless of the wet condition of his clothes, and pondered long and earnestly over his position, which was still one of some danger; but a sensation of light-hearted recklessness made the prospect before him seem very bright. He soon made up his mind what to do. The weather was extremely warm, so that after wringing the water out of

his linen clothes he experienced little discomfort ; but he felt that there would not only be discomfort but no little danger in travelling in such a country without arms, covering, or provisions. He therefore determined on the bold expedient of revisiting the Indian village during the darkness of the night in order to procure what he required. He ran great risk of being retaken ; but his necessity was urgent, and he was aware that several families were absent on a hunting expedition at that time whose huts were pretty certain to be unoccupied.

Accordingly, when two or three hours of the night had passed, he clambered with much difficulty down the precipitous rocks and reached the level plain, over which he quickly ran, and soon reached the outskirts of the village. The Indians were all asleep, and no sound disturbed the solemn stillness of the night. Going stealthily towards a hut, he peeped in at the open window, but could see and hear nothing. Just as he was about to enter, however, a long-drawn breath proved that it was occupied. He shrank hastily back into the deep shade of the bushes. In a few minutes he recovered from the agitation into which he had been thrown, and advanced cautiously towards another hut. This one seemed to be untenanted, so he opened the palm-leaf door gently and entered. No time was to be lost now. He found an empty bag, into which he hastily threw as much farina as he could carry without inconvenience. Besides this, he appropriated a long knife, a small hatchet, a flint and steel to enable him to make a fire, and a stout bow, with a quiver full of arrows. It was so dark that it was with difficulty he found these things. But as he was on the point of leaving he observed a white object in a corner. This turned out to be a light hammock, which he seized eagerly, and, rolling it up into a small bundle, placed it in the sack. He also sought for, and fortunately found, an old straw hat, which he put on.

Martin had now obtained all that he required, and was about to quit the hut when he became suddenly rooted to the spot with horror on observing the dark countenance of an Indian gazing at him with distended eyeballs over the edge of a hammock. His eyes, unaccustomed to the darkness of the room, had not at first observed that an Indian was sleeping there. He now felt that he was lost. The savage evidently knew him. Dreadful thoughts flashed through his brain. He thought of the knife in his belt, and how easily he could despatch the Indian in a moment as he lay ; but then the idea of imbruing his hands in human blood seemed so awful that he could not bring himself to do it.

As he looked steadily at the savage he observed that his gaze was one of intense horror, and it suddenly occurred to him that the Indian supposed he was a ghost ! Acting upon this supposition, Martin advanced his face slowly towards that of the Indian, put on a dark frown, and stood for a few seconds without uttering a word. The savage shrank back and shuddered from head to foot. Then, with a noiseless step, Martin retreated slowly backward towards the door and passed out like a spectre—never for a moment taking his eyes off those of the savage until he was lost in darkness. On gaining the forest he fled with a beating heart to his former retreat. But his fears were groundless, for the Indian firmly believed that Martin's spirit had visited his hut and carried away provisions for his journey to the land of spirits.

Without waiting to rest, Martin no sooner reached the scene of his

adventurous leap that he fastened his bag firmly on his shoulders and struck across the valley in the direction of the blue mountains that hemmed it in. Four or five hours' hard walking brought him to their base, and long before the rising sun shone down upon his recent home he was over the hills and far away, trudging onward with a weary foot, but with a light heart, in what he believed to be the east coast of Brazil. He did not dare to rest until the rugged peaks of the mountain range were between him and the savages: but when he had left these far behind him, he halted about mid-day to breakfast and repose by the margin of a delightfully cool mountain stream.

"I'm safe now!" said Martin aloud, as he threw down his bundle beneath a spreading tree and commenced to prepare breakfast. "O my friend Barney, I wish that you were here to keep me company!" The solitary youth looked round as if he half expected to see the rough visage and hear the gladsome voice of his friend; but no voice replied to his, and the only living creature he saw was a large monkey, which peered inquisitively down at him from among the branches of a neighbouring bush. This reminded him that he had left his pet Marmoset in the Indian village, and a feeling of deep self-reproach filled his heart. In the haste and anxiety of his flight he had totally forgotten his little friend. But regret was now unavailing. Marmoset was lost to him for ever.

Having kindled a small fire, Martin kneaded a large quantity of farina in the hollow of a smooth stone, and baked a number of flat cakes, which were soon fired and spread out upon the ground. While thus engaged, a snake of about six feet long and as thick as a man's arm glided past him. Martin started convulsively, for he had never seen one of the kind before, and he knew that the bite of some of the snakes is deadly. Fortunately his axe was at hand. Grasping it quickly, he killed the reptile with a single blow. Two or three mandioca cakes, a few wild fruits, and a draught of water from the stream, formed the wanderer's simple breakfast. After it was finished, he slung his hammock between two trees, and jumping in fell into a deep, untroubled slumber, in which he continued all that day and until daybreak the following morning.

After partaking of a hearty breakfast, Martin took up his bundle and resumed his travels. That day he descended into the level and wooded country that succeeded the mountain range, and that night he was obliged to encamp in a swampy place near a stagnant lake in which several alligators were swimming, and where the mosquitoes were so numerous that he found it absolutely impossible to sleep. At last, in despair, he sprang into the branches of the tree to which his hammock was slung and ascended to the top. Here, to his satisfaction, he found that there were scarcely any mosquitoes, while a cool breeze fanned his fevered brow, so he determined to spend the night in the tree.

By binding several branches together he formed a rude sort of couch, on which he lay down comfortably, placing his knife and bow beside him, and using the hammock rolled up as a pillow. As the sun was setting, and while he leaned on his elbow looking down through the leaves with much interest at the alligators that gambolled in the reedy lake, his attention was attracted by a slight rustling in the bushes near the foot of the tree. Looking down, he

perceived a large jaguar gliding through the underwood with cat-like stealth. Martin now observed that a huge alligator had crawled out of the lake, and was lying on the bank asleep a few yards from the margin. When the jaguar reached the edge of the bushes it paused, and then, with one tremendous spring, seized the alligator by the soft part beneath its tail. The huge monster struggled for a few seconds, endeavouring to reach the water, and then lay still, while the jaguar worried and tore at its tough hide with savage fury. Martin was much surprised at the passive conduct of the alligator. That it could not turn its stiff body so as to catch the jaguar in its jaws did not indeed surprise him, but he wondered very much to see the great reptile suffer pain so quietly. It seemed to be quite paralyzed. In a few minutes the jaguar retired a short distance. Then the alligator made a rush for the water; but the jaguar darted back and caught it again, and Martin now saw that the jaguar was actually playing with the alligator as a cat plays with a mouse before she kills it. During one of the cessations of the combat, if we may call it by that name, the alligator almost gained the water, and in the short struggle that ensued both animals rolled down the bank and fell into the lake. The tables were now turned. The jaguar made for the shore; but before it could reach it the alligator wheeled round, opened its tremendous jaws and caught its enemy by the middle. There was one loud splash in the water, as the alligator's powerful tail dashed it into foam, and one awful roar of agony, which was cut suddenly short and stifled as the monster dived to the bottom with its prey; then all was silent as the grave, and a few ripples on the surface were all that remained to tell of the battle that had been fought there.

Martin remained motionless on the tree top, brooding over the fight which he had just witnessed, until the deepening shadows warned him that it was time to seek repose. Turning on his side he laid his head on his pillow, while a soft breeze swayed the tree gently to and fro and rocked him sound asleep.

Thus, day after day, and week after week, did Martin Rattler wander alone through the great forests, sometimes pleasantly, and at other times with more or less discomfort; subsisting on game which he shot with his arrows, and on wild fruits. He met with many strange adventures by the way, which would fill numerous volumes were they to be written every one; but we must pass over many of these in silence, that we may recount those that were most interesting.

One evening, as he was walking through a very beautiful country, in which were numerous small lakes and streams, he was suddenly arrested by a crashing sound in the underwood, as if some large animal were coming towards him; and he had barely time to fit an arrow to his bow when the bushes in front of him were thrust aside, and the most hideous monster that he had ever seen appeared before his eyes. It was a tapir; but Martin had never heard of or seen such creatures before, although there are a good many in some parts of Brazil.

The tapir is a very large animal—about five or six feet long and three or four feet high. It is in appearance something between an elephant and a hog. Its nose is very long, and extends into a short proboscis; but there is no finger at the end of it like that of an

elephant. Its colour is a deep brownish black, its tough hide is covered with a thin sprinkling of strong hairs, and its mane is thick and bristly. So thick is its hide that a bullet can scarcely penetrate it; and it can crush its way through thickets and bushes, however dense, without receiving a scratch. Although a very terrific animal to look at, it is fortunately of a very peaceable and timid disposition, so that it flees from danger, and is very quick in discovering the presence of an enemy. Sometimes it is attacked by the jaguar, which springs suddenly upon it and fastens its claws in its back; but the tapir's tough hide is not easily torn, and he gets rid of his enemy by bouncing into the tangled bushes and bursting through them, so that the jaguar is soon *scraped* off his back! The tapir lives as much in the water as on the land, and delights to wallow like a pig in muddy pools. It is, in fact, very similar in many of its habits to the great hippopotamus of Africa, but is not quite so large. It feeds entirely on vegetables, buds, fruits, and the tender shoots of trees, and always at night. During the daytime it sleeps. The Indians of Brazil are fond of its flesh, and they hunt it with spears and poisoned arrows.

But Martin knew nothing of all this, and fully expected that the dreadful creature before him would attack and kill him; for when he observed its coarse tough-looking hide, and thought of the slender arrows with which he was armed, he felt that he had no chance, and there did not happen to be a tree near him at the time up which he could climb.

With the energy of despair he let fly an arrow with all his force, but the weak shaft glanced from the tapir's side without doing it the slightest damage. Then Martin turned to fly, but at the same moment the tapir did the same, to his great delight and surprise. It wheeled round with a snort, and went off crashing through the stout underwood as if it had been grass, leaving a broad track behind it.

On another occasion he met with a formidable-looking but comparatively harmless animal, called the great ant-eater. This remarkable creature is about six feet in length, with very short legs and very long strong claws, a short curly tail, and a sharp snout, out of which it thrusts a long narrow tongue. It can roll itself up like a hedgehog, and when in this position might easily be mistaken for a bundle of coarse hay. It lives chiefly if not entirely upon ants.

When Martin discovered the great ant-eater, it was about to begin its supper, so he watched it. The plain was covered with ant-hills, somewhat pillar-like in shape. At the foot of one of these the animal made an attack, tearing up earth and sticks with its enormously strong claws, until it made a large hole in the hard materials of which the hill was composed. Into this hole it thrust its long tongue, and immediately the ants swarmed upon it. The creature let its tongue rest till it was completely covered over with thousands of ants, then it drew it into its mouth and engulfed them all.

As Martin had no reason in the world for attempting to shoot the great ant-eater, and as he was, moreover, by no means sure if he could kill it if he were to try, he passed on quietly and left this curious animal to finish its supper in peace.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Martin meets with friends, and visits the diamond mines.

ONE day, after Martin had spent many weeks in wandering alone through the forest, during the course of which he was sometimes tempted to despair of seeing the face of man again, he discovered a beaten track, at the sight of which his heart bounded with delight. It was a Saturday afternoon when he made this discovery, and he spent the Sabbath day in rest beside it. For Martin had more than once called to remembrance the words which good Aunt Dorothy used to hear him repeat out of the Bible—"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." He had many long, earnest, and serious meditations in that silent forest, such as a youth would be very unlikely to have almost in any other circumstances, except, perhaps, on a sick-bed; and among other things he had been led to consider that if he made no difference between Saturday and Sunday, he must certainly be breaking that commandment. So he resolved thenceforth to rest on the Sabbath day; and he found much benefit, both to mind and body, from this arrangement. During this particular Sabbath he rested beside the beaten track, and often did he walk up and down it a short way, wondering where it would lead him to; and several times he prayed that he might be led by it to the habitations of civilised men.

Next day, after breakfast, he prepared to set out; but now he was much perplexed as to which way he ought to go, for the track did not run in the direction in which he had been travelling, but at right angles to that way. While he still hesitated, the sound of voices struck on his ear, and he almost fainted with excitement; for besides the hope that he might now meet with friends, there was also the fear that those approaching might be enemies, and the sudden sound of the human voice, which he had not heard for so long, tended to create conflicting and almost overwhelming feelings in his breast. Hiding quickly behind a tree, he awaited the passing of the cavalcade; for the sounds of horses' hoofs were now audible.

In a few minutes a string of laden mules approached, and then six horsemen appeared, whose bronzed olive complexions straw hats, and ponchos, betokened them Brazilians. As they passed, Martin hailed them in an unsteady voice. They pulled up suddenly, and drew pistols from their holsters; but on seeing only a fair youth armed with a bow, they replaced their weapons, and with a look of surprise rode up and assailed him with a volley of unintelligible Portuguese.

"Do any of you speak English?" inquired Martin, advancing.

One of the horseman replied, "Yees, I spok one leet. Ver' smoll. Where you be com?"

"I have escaped from the Indians who live in the mountains far away over yonder. I have been wandering now for many weeks in the forest; and I wish to get to the sea-coast, or to some town where I may get something to do, that I may be enabled to return home."

"Ho!" said the horseman gravely. "You com vid us. Ve go vid goods to de diamond mines. Git vork dere, yees. Put you body on dat hoss."

As the Brazilian spoke he pointed to a spare horse, which was led, along with several others, by a Negro. Thanking him for his

politeness, Martin seized the horse by the mane and vaulted into the saddle, if the rude contrivance on its back might be so designated. The string of mules then moved on, and Martin rode with a light heart beside this obliging stranger, conversing with much animation.

In a very short time he learned, through the medium of his own bad Portuguese and the Brazilian's worse English, that he was not more than a day's ride from the diamond mines of that province of Brazil which is named Minas Geraes ; that he was still many leagues distant from the sea ; and that he would be sure to get work at the mines if he wished it, for the chief overseer, the Baron Fagoni, was an amiable man, and very fond of the English, but he could not speak their language at all, and required an interpreter. "And," said the Brazilian, with a look of great dignity, "I hab de honour for be de 'terpreter."

"Ah !" exclaimed Martin, "then I am in good fortune, for I shall have a friend at court."

The interpreter smiled slightly and bowed, after which they proceeded for some time in silence.

Next evening they arrived at the mines ; and, after seeing to the comfort of his horse, and inquiring rather hastily as to the welfare of his family, the interpreter conducted Martin to the overseer's house, in order to introduce him.

The Baron Fagoni stood smoking in the doorway of his dwelling as they approached, and the first impression that Martin received of him was anything but agreeable.

He was a large, powerful man, with an enormous red beard and moustache, and a sombrero-like hat that concealed nearly the whole of his face. He seemed an irritable man, too, for he jerked his arms about and stamped in a violent manner as they drew near, and instead of waiting to receive them, he entered the house hastily and shut the door in their faces.

"The Baron would do well to take lessons in civility," said Martin, colouring as he turned to the interpreter.

"Ah, he be a leet pecoolair, sometimes ! Nev'r mind. Ve vill go to him."

So saying, the interpreter opened the door and entered the hall where the overseer was seated at a desk, writing, as if in violent haste. Seeing that he did not mean to take notice of them, the interpreter spoke to him in Portuguese ; but he was soon interrupted by a sharp reply, uttered in a harsh, grating voice, by the overseer, who did not look up or cease from his work.

Again the interpreter spoke as if in some surprise ; but he was cut short by the overseer uttering, in a deep stern voice, the single word "Obey."

With a low bow the interpreter turned away, and taking Martin by the arm led him into an inner apartment, where, having securely fastened the window, he said to him. "De Baron say you be von blackguard tef ; go 'bout contrie for steal diamonds. He make pris'ner ov you. Adios."

So saying, the interpreter made his bow and retired, locking the door behind him, and leaving Martin standing in the middle of the room, staring before him in speechless amazement.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The diamond mines—More and more astonishing.

IF Martin Rattler was amazed at the treatment he experienced at the hands of his new acquaintances on arriving, he had occasion to be very much surprised at what occurred three hours after his incarceration.

It was getting dark when he was locked up, and for upwards of two hours he was left in total darkness. Moreover he began to feel very hungry, having eaten nothing since mid-day. He was deeply engaged in devising plans for his escape when he was interrupted by the door being unlocked and a Negro slave entered with four magnificent candles, made of bees'-wax, which he placed upon the table. Then he returned to the door, where another slave handed him a tray containing dishes, knives and forks, and, in short, all the requisites for laying out a supper-table. Having spread a clean linen cloth on the board, he arranged covers for two, and going to the door placed his head to one side and regarded his arrangements with much complacency, and without paying the slightest attention to Martin, who pinched himself in order to make sure he was not dreaming.

In a few minutes the second Negro returned with an enormous tray, on which were dishes of all sizes, from under those covers came the most savoury odours imaginable. Having placed these symmetrically on the board, both slaves retired and relocked the door without saying a word.

At last it began to dawn on Martin's imagination that the overseer must be an eccentric individual, who found pleasure in taking his visitors by surprise. But although this seemed a possible solution of the difficulty, he did not feel satisfied with it. He could with difficulty resist the temptation to attack the viand, however, and was beginning to think of doing this, regardless of all consequences, when the door again opened and the Baron Fagoni entered, relocked the door, put the key in his pocket, and standing before the prisoner with folded arms, gazed at him intently from beneath his sombrero.

Martin could not stand this. "Sir," said he, starting up, "if this is a joke, you have carried it far enough; and if you really detain me here a prisoner, every feeling of honour ought to deter you from adding insult to injury."

To this sternly-delivered speech the Baron made no reply, but springing suddenly upon Martin, he grasped him in his powerful arms, and crushed him to his broad chest till he almost broke every bone in his body!

"Och! cushla, bliss yer young face! sure it's yersilf, and no mistake! Kape still, Martin, dear. Let me look at ye, darlint! Ah! then, isn't it my heart that's been broken for months an' months past about ye!"

Readers, it would be utterly in vain for me to attempt to describe either the words that flowed from the lips of Martin Rattler and Barney O'Flannagan on this happy occasion, or the feelings that filled their swelling heart. The speechless amazement of Martin, the ejaculatory exclamations of the Baron Fagoni, the rapid questions and brief replies, are all totally indescribable. Suffice it to say, that for full quarter of an hour they exclaimed, shouted, and danced round

each other, without coming to any satisfactory knowledge of how each other had got to the same place, except that Barney at last discovered that Martin had travelled there by chance, and he had reached the mines by "intuition." Having settled this point, they sobered down a little.

"Now, Martin, darlint," cried the Irishman, throwing aside his hat for the first time, and displaying his well-known jolly visage, of which the forehead, eyes, and nose alone survived the general inundation of red hair, "ye'll be hungry, I've small doubt; so sit ye down, lad, to supper, and you'll tell me yer story as ye go along, and afther that I'll tell ye mine, while I smoke my pipe—the ould cutty, boy, that has comed through fire and wather, sound as a bell and blacker than iver!"

The Baron held up the well-known instrument of fumigation, as he spoke, in triumph.

Supper was superb. There were venison steaks, armadillo cutlets, tapir hash, iguana pie, and an immense variety of fruits and vegetables, that would have served a dozen men, besides cakes and splendid coffee.

"You live well here, Barney—I beg pardon, Baron Fagoni," said Martin, during a pause in their meal; "how in the world did you come by that name?"

Barney winked expressively. "Ah, boy, I wish I may niver have a worse. Ye see, when I first comed here, about four months ago, I found that the mine was owned by an Irish gentleman; an', like all the race, he's a trump. He took to me at wonce when he hear'd my voice, and then he took more to me when he comed to know me character; and says he to me wan day, 'Barney,' says he, 'I'm gettin' tired o' this kind o' life now, and if ye'll agree to stop here as overseer, and sind me the proceeds o' the mine to Rio Janeiro, a great city on the sea-coast, an' the capital o' Brazil, I'll give ye a good share o' the profits. But,' says he, 'ye'll need to pretind ye're a Roosian, or a Pole, or somethin' o' that kind; for the fellows in thim parts are great rascals, and there's a few Englishmen among them who would soon find out that ye're only a Jack-tar before the mast, and would chate ye at no allowance. But if ye could spake no language under the sun but the gibberish pecooliar to the unbeknown provinces o' Siberia, ye could escape detection as far as yer voice is consarned; and by lettin' yer beard grow as long as possible, and dressin' yerself properly, ye might pass and be as dignified as the great Mogul.'

"'Musha!' said I, 'but if I don't spake me own tongue I'll have to be dumb altogither.'

"'No fear,' says he; 'I'll tache ye enough Portuguese in a month or two to begin with, an' ye'll pick it up aisy after that.' And sure enough I began, tooth and nail, and, by hard workin', got on faster than I expected; for I can spake as much o' the lingo now as tides me over needcessities, and I understand most o' what's said to me. Anyhow, I ginerally see what they're drivin' at."

"So, then, you're actually in charge of the mine?" said Martin in surprise.

"Jist so, boy; but I'm tired of it already—it's by no means so pleasant as I expected it would be—so I'm thinkin' o' lavin' it, and takin' to the say again. I'm longin' dreadful to see the salt wather wance more."

"But what will the owner say, Barney? won't he have cause to complain of your breaking your engagement?"

"Niver a bit, boy. He tould me, before we parted, that if I wanted to quit I was to hand over the consarn to the interpreter, who is an honest fellow, I belave; so I'm jist goin' to pocket a di'mond or two, and ask lave to take them home wid me. I'll be off in a week, if all goes well. An' now, Martin, fill yer glass—ye'll find the wine is not bad after wan or two glasses—an' I'll tell ye about my adventures since I saw ye last."

"But you have not explained about your name," said Martin.

"Och! the fact is, that when I comed here I fortunately fell in with the owner first, and we spoke almost entirely in Irish, so nobody understood where I comed from; and the interpreter hear'd the master call me by my name, so he wint off and said to the people that a great Barono Flanagoni had come, and was up at the house wid the master. But we corrected him afterwards, and gave him to understand that I was the Baron Fagoni. I had some trouble with the people at first, after the owner left; but I pounded wan or two o' the biggest o' them to sich a extint that their own friends hardly knew them, an' iver since they've been mighty civil."

Having carefully filled the black pipe, and involved himself in his own favourite atmosphere, the Baron Fagoni then proceeded to relate his adventures, and dilated upon them to such an extent that five or six pipes were filled and finished ere the story came to a close. Martin also related his adventures, to which his companion listened with such breathless attention and earnestness that his pipe was constantly going out, and the two friends did not retire to rest till near daybreak.

The substance of the Baron's narrative was as follows:—

At the time that he had been so suddenly separated from his friend, Barney had overcome many of his opponents, but at length he was overpowered by numbers, and his arms were firmly bound; after which he was roughly driven before them through the woods for several days, and was at length taken to their village among the mountains. Here he remained a close prisoner for three weeks, shut up in a small hut, and bound by a strong rope to a post. Food was taken to him by an old Indian woman, who paid no attention at first to what he said to her, for the good reason that she did not understand a word of English. The persuasive eloquence of her prisoner's tones, however, or perhaps his brogue, seemed in the course of a few days to have made an impression on her; for she condescended to smile at the unintelligible compliments which Barney lavished upon her in the hope of securing her good-will.

During all this time the Irishman's heart was torn with conflicting feelings; and although, from the mere force of habit, he could jest with the old woman when she paid her daily visits, there was no feeling of fun in his bosom, but, on the contrary, a deep and overwhelming sorrow, which showed itself very evidently on his expressive face. He groaned aloud when he thought of Martin, whom he never expected again to see; and he dreaded every hour the approach of his savage captors, who, he fully expected, retained him in order to put him to death.

One day, while he was sitting in a very disconsolate mood, the Indian woman entered with his usual dinner—a plate of thick soup

and a coarse cake. Barney smiled upon her as usual, and then, letting his eyes fall on the ground, sighed deeply, for his heart was heavier than usual that day. As the woman was about to go, he looked earnestly and gravely in her face, and putting his large hand gently on her head, patted her gray hairs. This tender action seemed to affect the old woman more than usual. She laid her hand on Barney's arm, and looked as if she wished to speak. Then turning suddenly from him, she drew a small knife from her girdle and dropped it on the ground, as if accidentally, while she left the hut and refastened the door. Barney's heart leaped. He seized the knife and concealed it hastily in his bosom, and then ate his dinner with more than ordinary zest, for now he possessed the means of cutting the strong rope that bound him.

He waited with much impatience until night closed over the Indian village; and then cutting his bonds, he tore down the rude and rather feeble fastenings of the door. In another instant he was dashing along at full speed through the forest, without hat or coat, and with the knife clutched in his right hand! Presently he heard cries behind him, and redoubled his speed, for now he knew that the savages had discovered his escape and were in pursuit. But, although a good runner, Barney was no match for the lithe and naked Indians. They rapidly gained on him, and he was about to turn at bay and fight for his life, when he observed water gleaming through the foliage on his left. Dashing down a glade, he came to the edge of a broad river with a rapid current. Into this he sprang recklessly, intending to swim with the stream; but ere he lost his footing he heard the low, deep thunder of a cataract a short distance below! Drawing back in terror, he regained the bank, and waded up a considerable distance in the shallow water, so as to leave no trace of his footsteps. Then he leaped upon a rock, and catching hold of the lower branches of a large tree, drew himself up among the dense foliage, just as the yelling savages rushed with wild tumult to the water's edge. Here they paused, as if baffled. They spoke in rapid, vehement tones for a few seconds, and then one party hastened down the banks of the stream towards the fall, while another band searched the banks above.

Barney's heart fell as he sat panting in the tree, for he knew that they would soon discover him. But he soon resolved on a bold expedient. Slipping down from the tree, he ran deliberately back towards the village, and, as he drew near, he followed the regular beaten track that led towards it. On the way he encountered one or two savages hastening after the pursuing party; but he leaped lightly into the bushes, and lay still till they were past. Then he ran on, skirted round the village, and pushed into the woods in an entirely opposite direction from the one in which he had first set out. Keeping by one of the numerous tracks that radiated from the village into the forest he held on at top speed, until his progress was suddenly arrested by a stream about twenty yards broad. It was very deep and he was about to plunge in, in order to swim across, when he observed a small montaria or canoe lying on the bank. This he launched quickly, and observing that the river took a bend a little further down, and appeared to proceed in the direction he wished to pursue—namely, away from the Indian village—he paddled down the rapid stream as fast as he could. The current was very strong, so

that his little bark flew down it like an arrow, and on more than one occasion narrowly missed being dashed to pieces on the rocks which here and there rose above the stream.

In about two hours Barney came to a place where the stream took another bend to the left, and soon after the canoe swept out upon the broad river into which he had at first so nearly plunged. He was a long way below the fall now, for its sound was inaudible ; but it was no time to abate his exertions. The Indians might be still in pursuit so he continued to paddle all that night, and did not take rest until daybreak. Then he slept for two hours, ate a few wild fruits, and continued his journey.

In the course of the next day, to his great joy, he overtook a trading-canoe, which had been up another tributary of this river, and was descending with part of a cargo of india-rubber shoes. None of the men, of whom there were four, could speak English ; but they easily saw from the Irishman's condition that he had escaped from enemies and was in distress, so they took him on board, and were glad to avail themselves of his services, for, as we have before mentioned, men are not easily procured for voyaging in those parts of Brazil. Three weeks after this they arrived at a small town, where the natives were busily engaged in the manufacture of shoes, bottles, and other articles of India-rubber, and here Barney found employment for a short time.

The *seringa*, or india-rubber tree, grows plentifully in some parts of Brazil, and many hundreds of the inhabitants are employed in the manufacture of shoes. The india-rubber is the juice of the tree, and flows from it when an incision is made. This juice is poured into moulds and left to harden. It is of a yellowish colour naturally, and is blackened in the course of preparation. Barney did not stay long here. Shoemaking, he declared, was not his calling by any means ; so he seized the first opportunity he had of joining a party of traders going into the interior, in the direction of the diamond districts. The journey was long and varied—sometimes by canoe and sometimes on the backs of mules and horses—and many extraordinary adventures did he go through ere he reached the diamond mines ; and when at length he did so great was his disappointment. Instead of the glittering caves which his vivid imagination had pictured, he found that there was no caves at all ; that the diamonds were found by washing in the muddy soil ; and worst of all, that when found they were dim and unpolished, so that they seemed no better than any other stone. However, he resolved to continue there for a short time, in order to make a little money ; but now that Martin had arrived, he thought that they could not do better than make their way to the coast as fast as possible, and go to sea.

"The only thing I have to regret," he said, at the conclusion of his narrative, "is that I left Grampus behind me. But arrah ! I came off from the savages in such a hurry that I had no time to tell him I was gone !"

Having sat till daybreak, the two friends went to bed to dream of each other and of home.

Next morning Barney took Martin to visit the diamond mines. On the way they passed a band of Negro slaves who encircled a large fire, the weather being very cold. It was at that time about the end of July, which is one of the coldest months in the year. In this

part of Brazil summer and winter are reversed—the coldest months being May, June, and July; the hottest, November, December, January, and February.

Minas Geraes, the diamond district, is one of the richest provinces in Brazil. The inhabitants are almost entirely occupied in mining or in supplying the miners with the necessaries of life. Diggers and shopkeepers are the two principal classes, and of these the latter are best off; for their trade is steady and lucrative, while the success of the miners is very uncertain. Frequently a large sum of money and much time are expended in mining without any adequate result; but the merchants always find a ready sale for their merchandise, and, as they take diamonds and gold-dust in exchange, they generally realize large profits and soon become rich. The poor miner is like the gambler. He digs on in hope, sometimes finding barely enough to supply his wants, at other times making a fortune suddenly, but never giving up in despair, because he knows that at every handful of earth he turns up he may perhaps find a diamond worth hundreds or, it may be, thousands of pounds.

Cidade Diamantina—the City of Diamonds—is the capital of the province. It is a large city, with many fine churches and buildings; and the whole population, consisting of more than six thousand souls are engaged, directly or indirectly, in mining. Every one who owns a few slaves employs them in washing the earth for gold and diamonds.

The mine of which Barney had so unexpectedly become overseer was a small one, in a remote part of the district, situated among the mountains, and far distant from the City of Diamonds. There were only a few huts, rudely built and roofed with palm-leaves, besides a larger building, or cottage, in which the Baron Fagoni resided.

"'Tis a strange life they lead here," said Barney, as he led Martin down a gorge of the mountains towards a small spot of level ground on which the slaves were at work—"a strange life, and by no means a pleasant wan, for the feedin' is none o' the best and the work very seavare."

"Why, Barney, if I may judge from last night's supper, the feeding seems to be excellent."

"Thru, boy, the Baron Fagoni feeds well, bekase he's the cock o' the roost; but the poor Naygurs are not overly well-fed, and the cratur's are up to their knees in wather all day, washing di'monds; so they suffer much from rheumatiz and colds. Och, but it's murther intirely, an' I've more than wance felt inclined to fill their pockets with di'monds and set them all free! Jist look, now; there they are, hard at it."

As he spoke they arrived at the mine. The ground in the vicinity was all cut up and dug out to a considerable depth, and a dozen Negroes were standing under a shed washing the earth, while others were engaged in the holes excavating the material. While Martin watched them his friend explained the process.

The different kinds of soil through which it is necessary to cut before reaching the diamond deposit are, first, about twenty feet of reddish sandy soil; then about eight feet of a tough yellowish clay; beneath this lies a layer of coarse reddish sand, below which is the peculiar soil in which diamonds are found. It is called by the miners the *cascalho*, and consists of loose gravel, the pebbles of which are

rounded and polished, having at some previous era been subject to the action of running water. The bed varies in thickness from one to four feet, and the pebbles are of various kinds, but when there are many of a species called *esmerilo preto*, the *cascalho* is considered to be rich in diamonds.

Taking Martin round to the back of the shed, Barney showed him a row of troughs, about three feet square, close to the edge of a pond of water. These troughs are called *bacos*. In front of each stood a Negro slave up to the knees in water. Each had a wooden plate, with which he dashed water upon the rough *cascalho* as it was thrown into the trough by another slave. By this means and by stirring it with a hoe, the earth and sand are washed away. Two overseers were closely watching the process, for it is during this part of the operation that the largest diamonds are found. These overseers were seated on elevated seats, each being armed with a long leathern whip, to keep a sharp look out, for the slaves are expert thieves.

After the *cascalho* had been thus purified it was carefully removed to the shed to be finally washed.

Here seven slaves were seated on the side of a small canal, about four feet broad, with their legs in the water nearly up to their knees. This canal is called the *lavadeira*. Each man had a small wooden platter, into which another slave, who stood behind him, put a shovelful of purified *cascalho*. The *bateia*, or platter, was then filled with water and washed with the utmost care several times, being closely examined after each washing, and the diamonds picked out. Sometimes many platefuls were examined and nothing found; at other times several diamonds were found in one plate. While Martin was looking on with much curiosity and interest, one of the slaves uttered an exclamation and held up a minute stone between his finger and thumb.

"Ah! good luck to ye, lad!" said Barney, advancing and taking the diamond which had been discovered. "See here, Martin; there's the thing, lad, that sparkles on the brow o' beauty, and gives the Naggurs rheumatiz—"

"Not to mention their usefulness in providing the great Baron Fagoni with a livelihood," added Martin with a smile.

Barney laughed, and going up to the place where the two overseers were seated, dropped the precious gem into a plate placed between them for the purpose of receiving the diamonds as they were found.

"They git fifteen or twinty a day sometimes," said Barney, as they retraced their steps to the cottage; "and I've heard o' them getting stones worth many thousands o' pounds; but the biggest they iver found since I comed here was not worth more than four hundred."

"And what do you do with them, Barney, when they are found?" inquired Martin.

"Sind them to Rio Janeiro, lad, where my employer sells them. I don't know how much he makes a year by it, but the thing must pay, for he's very liberal with his cash, and niver forgits to pay wages. There's always a lot o' gould-dust found in the bottom of the *bateia* after each washing, and that is carefully collected and sold. But, arrah! I wouldn't give wan snifter o' the say-breezes for all the di'monds in Brazil!"

As Barney said this he entered his cottage and flung down his hat with the air of a man who was resolved to stand it no longer.

"But why don't you wash on your own account?" cried Martin. "What say you—shall we begin together? We may make our fortune the first week, perhaps!"

Barney shook his head. "No, no, boy; I've no faith in my luck with the di'monds or gould. Nevertheless I have hear'd o' men makin' an awful heap o' money that way, partiklarly one man that made his fortin with wan stone."

"Who was that lucky dog?" asked Martin.

"Well, ye see, it happened this way. There's a custom hereaway that slaves are allowed to work on Sundays and holidays on their own account; but when the mines was a government concern this was not allowed, and the slaves were the most awful thieves livin', and often made off with some o' the largest di'monds. Well, there was a man named Juiz de Paz, who owned a small shop, and used to go down now and then to Rio de Janeiro to buy goods. Wan evenin' he returned from wan o' his long journeys, and, bein' rather tired, wint to bed. He was jist goin' off into a comfortable doze when there came a terrible bumpin' at the door.

"'Hallo!' cried Juiz, growlin' angrily in the Portugee tongue; 'what dy'e want?'

"There was no answer but another bumpin' at the door. So up he jumps, and, takin' down a big blunderbuss that hung over his bed, opened the door, an' seized a Naygur be the hair o' the head!

"'O Massa! O Massa! let him go! Got di'mond for to sell!'

"On hearin' this, Juiz let go, and found that the slave had come to offer for sale a large di'mond, which weighed about two pennyweights and a third.

"What d'ye ask for it?" said Juiz, with sparklin' eyes.

"'Six hundred mil-reis,' answered the Naygur.

"This was about equal to one hundred and eighty pounds stirlin'. Without more words about it, he paid down the money, and the slave went away. Juiz lost his sleep that night. He went and tould the neighbours he had forgot a piece of important business in Rio and must go back at wance. So back he went and stayed some time in the city, tryin' to git his di'mond safely sold; for it was sich a big wan that he feared the government fellows might hear o't, in which case he would have got tin years' transportation to Angola on the coast of Africa. At last, however, he got rid of it for twenty thousand mil-reis, which is about six thousand pounds. It was all paid to him in hard dollars, and he nearly went out o' his wits for joy. But he was brought down a peg nixt day, when he found that the same di'mond was sold for nearly twice as much as he had got for it. Howiver, he had made a pretty considerable fortin; an' he's now the richest di'mond and gould merchant in the district."

"A lucky fellow certainly," said Martin. "But I must say I have no taste for such chance work; so I'm quite ready to start for the sea-coast whenever it suits the Baron Fagoni's convenience."

While they were speaking they were attracted by voices outside the cottage, which sounded as if in altercation. In another minute the door burst open, and a man entered hurriedly, followed by the interpreter.

"Your overseer is impertinent!" exclaimed the man, who was a

tall, swarthy Brazilian. "I wish to buy a horse or a good mule, and he won't let me have one. I am not a beggar ; I offer to pay."

The man spoke in Portuguese, and Barney replied in the same language,—

"You can have a horse *if you pay for it.*"

The Brazilian replied by throwing a heavy bag of dollars on the table.

"All right," said Barney, turning to his interpreter and conversing with him in an undertone. "Give him what he requires." So saying he bowed the Brazilian out of the room, and returned to the enjoyment of his black pipe, which had been interrupted by the incident.

"That man seems in a hurry," said Martin.

"So he is. My interpreter tells me that he is quite like one o' the blackguards that sometimes go about the mines doin' mischief, and he's in hot haste to be away. I shouldn't wonder if the spalpeen has been stealin' gould or di'monds and wants to escape. But of course I've nothin' to do with that, unless I was sure of it ; and I've a horse or two to sell, and he has money to pay for it, so he's welcome. He says he is makin' straight for the say-coast ; and with your lave, Martin, my boy, you and I will be doin' that same in a week after this, and say good-bye to the di'mond mines."

CHAPTER XXV.

New scenes and pleasant travelling.

A NEW and agreeable sensation is a pleasant thing. It was on as bright an evening as ever shone upon Brazil, and in as fair a scene as one could wish to behold, that Martin Rattler and his friend Barney experienced a new sensation. On the wide campos, on the flower-bedecked and grassy plains, they each bestrode a fiery charger ; and in the exultation of health and strength and liberty, they swept over the greensward of the undulating campos as light as the soft wind that fanned their bronzed cheeks, as gay in heart as the buzzing insects that hovered above the brilliant flowers.

"Oh, this is best of all !" shouted Martin, turning his sparkling eyes to Barney, as he reined up his steed after a gallop that caused its nostrils to expand and its eyes to dilate. "There's nothin' like it ! A fiery charger that can't and *won't* tire, and a glorious sweep of plain like that ! Huza ! whoop !" And loosening the rein of his willing horse, away he went again in a wild headlong career.

"Och, boy, pull up, or ye'll kill the baste !" cried Barney, who thundered along at Martin's side enjoying to the full the spring of his powerful horse ; for Barney had spent the last farthing of his salary on the two best steeds the country could produce, being determined, as he said, to make the last overland voyage on clipper-built animals which, he wisely concluded, would fetch a good price at the end of the journey. "Pull up ! dy'e hear ? They can't stand goin' at that pace. Back yer topsails, ye young rascal, or I'll board ye in a jiffy."

"How can I pull up with *that* before me ?" cried Martin, pointing to a wide ditch or gully that lay in front of them. "I must go over that first."

"Go over that !" cried Barney, endeavouring to rein in his horse

and looking with an anxious expression at the chasm. "It's all very well for you to talk o' goin' over, ye feather, but fifteen stuns— Ah, then, *won't* ye stop? Bad luck to him, he's got the bit in his teeth! Oh then, ye ugly baste, go, and my blessin' go with ye!"

The leap was inevitable. Martin went over like a deer. Barney shut his eyes, seized the pommel of the saddle, and went at it like a thunderbolt. In the excitement of the moment he shouted in a stentorian voice, "Clap on all sail! d'ye hear? Stunsails and sky-scrapers! Kape her steady! Hooray!"

It was well for Barney that he had seized the saddle. Even as it was he received a tremendous blow from the horse's head as it took the leap, and was thrown back on its haunches when it cleared the ditch, which it did nobly.

"Hallo, old boy! not hurt, I hope," said Martin, suppressing his laughter as his comrade scrambled on to the saddle. "You travel about on the back of your horse at full gallop like a circus rider."

"Whist, darlint, I do belave he has damaged my faygur-head. What a nose I've got! Sure I can see it mysilf without squintin'."

"So you have, Barney. It's a little swelled, but never mind. We must all learn by experience, you know. So come along."

"Hould on, ye spalpeen, till I get my wind!"

But Martin was off again at full speed, and Barney's horse, scorning to be left behind, took the bit again in its teeth and went—as he himself expressed it—"screamin' before the wind." A new sensation is not always and necessarily an agreeable thing. Martin and Barney found it so on the evening of that same day, as they reclined (they could not sit) by the side of their fire on the campo under the shelter of one of the small trees which grew here and there at wide intervals on the plain. They had left the diamond mine early that morning, and their first day on horseback proved to them that there are shadows as well as lights in equestrian life. Their only baggage was a single change of apparel and a small bag of diamonds—the latter being the product of the mine during the Baron Fagoni's reign, and which that worthy was conveying faithfully to his employer. During the first part of the day they had ridden through a hilly and wooded country, and towards evening they emerged upon one of the smaller campos which occur here and there in the district.

"Martin," said Barney, as he lay smoking his pipe, "'tis a pity that there's no pleasure in this world without *something* cross-grained into it. My own feelin's is as if I had been lately passed through a stamping machine."

"Wrong, Barney, as usual," said Martin, who was busily engaged concluding supper with an orange. "If we had pleasures without discomforts we wouldn't half enjoy them. We need lights and shadows in life—what are you grinning at, Barney?"

"Oh, nothin'! only ye're a re-markable philosopher, when ye're in the vein."

"'Tis always in vain to talk philosophy to you, Barney, so good might t'ye. Oh, dear me, I wish I could sit down! but there's no alternative—either bolt upright or quite flat."

In quarter of an hour they both forgot pleasures and sorrows alike in sleep. Next day the sun rose on the edge of the campo as it does out of the ocean, streaming across its grassy billows, and tipping the ridges as with ruddy gold. At first Martin and Barney did not

enjoy the lovely scene, for they felt stiff and sore ; but after half-an-hour's ride they began to recover, and when the sun rose in all its glory on the wide plain, the feelings of joyous, bounding freedom that such scenes always engender obtained the mastery, and they coursed along in silent delight.

The campo was hard, composed chiefly of a stiff red clay soil, and covered with short grass in most places ; but here and there were rank bushes of long hairy grasses, around and amongst which grew a multitude of the most exquisitely beautiful flowerets and plants of elegant forms. Wherever these flowers flourished very luxuriantly, there were single trees of stunted growth and thick bark, which seldom rose above fifteen or twenty feet. Besides these there were rich flowering myrtles and here and there a grotesque cactus or two.

Under one of these trees they reined up after a ride of two hours, and picketing their horses, prepared breakfast. It was soon despatched, and then remounting, away they went once more over the beautiful plains.

For many days did Martin and Barney travel through the land on horseback, now galloping over open campos, anon threading their way through the forest, and sometimes toiling slowly up the mountain sides. The aspect of the country varied continually as they advanced, and the feelings of excessive hilarity with which they commenced the journey began to subside as they became accustomed to it.

One evening they were toiling slowly up a steep range of hills which had been the prospect in front of them the whole of that day. As they neared the summit of the range Martin halted at a stream to drink, and Barney advanced alone. Suddenly Martin was startled by a loud cry, and looking up he saw Barney on his knees with his hands before him. Rushing up the hill, Martin found his comrade with his face flushed and the tears coursing down his cheeks as he stared before him.

"Look at it, Martin, dear !" he cried, starting up and flinging his cap in the air, and shouting like a madman. "The say ! my own native illiment ! the beautiful ocean ! Och, darlint, my blessin' on ye ! Little did I think to see you more—hooray !"

Barney sang and danced till he sank down on the grass exhausted ; and, to say truth, Martin felt much difficulty in restraining himself from doing likewise, for before him was spread out the bright ocean, gleaming in the light of the sinking sun, and calm and placid as a mirror. It was indeed a glorious sight to these two sailors who had not seen the sea for nearly two years. It was like coming suddenly face-to-face, after a long absence, with an old and much-loved friend.

Although visible, the sea, however, was still a long way off from the Serra dos Orgaos, on which they stood. But their steeds were good, and it was not long ere they were both rolling like dolphins in the beautiful bay of Rio de Janeiro.

Here Barney delivered up the gold and diamonds to his employer, who paid him liberally for his services, and entertained them both hospitably while they remained in the city. The bag of gold and diamonds, which had been found on the body of the dead man they appropriated, as it was absolutely impossible to discover the rightful owner. Barney's friend bought it of them at full price, and when

they embarked, soon after, on board a homeward bound ship, each had four hundred pounds in his pocket !

As they sailed out of the noble harbour, Martin sat on the poop gazing at the receding shore while thick coming memories crowded on his brain

His imagination flew back to the day when he first landed on the coast and escaped with his friend Barney from the pirates—to the hermit's cottage in the lonely valley, when he first made acquaintance with monkeys, iguanas, jaguars, armadillos, and all the wonderful, beautiful, curious bird, beast, and reptiles, plant, trees, and flowers, that live and flourish in that romantic country. Once more, in fancy, he was sailing up the mighty Amazon, shooting alligators on its banks, spearing fish in its waters, paddling through its curious Gapo, and swinging in his hammock under its luxuriant forests. Once again he was a prisoner among the wild Indians, and he started convulsively as he thought of the terrible leap over the precipice into the stream that flowed into the heart of the earth. Then he wandered in the lonely forest. Suddenly the diamond mines were before him, and Barney's jovial voice rang in his ears, and he replied to it with energy, for now he was bounding on a fiery steed over the grassy campos. With a deep sigh he awoke from his reverie to find himself surrounded by the great wide sea.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The return.

ARTHUR JOLLYBOY, Esquire, of the the Old Hulk, sat on the top of a tall three-legged stool in his own snug little office in the sea-port town of Bilton, with his legs swinging to and fro ; his socks displayed a considerable way above the top of his gaiters ; his hands thrust deep into his breeches pockets ; his spectacles high on his bald forehead, and his eyes looked through the open letter that lay before him—though the desk beneath it—though the plank floor, cellars, and foundations of the edifice—and though the entire world into the distant future beyond.

"Four thousand pair of socks," he murmured, pulling down his spectacles and consulting the open letter for the tenth time ; "four thousand pair of socks, with the hitch, same as last bale, but a very little coarser in material."

"Four thousand pair ! and who's to make them, I wonder ? If poor Mrs. Dorothy Grumbit were here—ah ! well she's done, so it can't be helped. Four thousand !—dear me, who *will* make them ? Do *you* know ?"

This question was addressed to his youngest clerk, who sat on the opposite side of the desk staring at Mr. Jollyboy with that open impudence of expression peculiar to young puppy-dogs whose masters are unusually indulgent.

"No, sir, I don't," said the clerk with a broad grin.

Before the preplexed merchant could come at any conclusion on this knotty subject, the door opened, and Martin Rattler entered the room, followed by his friend Barney O'Flannagan.

"You've come to the wrong room, friends," said Mr. Jollyboy with a benignant smile. "My principal clerk engages men and pays wages. His office is just opposite ; first door in the passage."

"We don't want to engage," said Martin; "we wish to speak with you, sir."

"Oh, beg pardon!" cried Mr. Jollyboy, leaping of the stool with surprising agility for a man of his years. "Come in this way. Pray be seated. Eh! ah! surely I've seen you before, my good fellow?"

"Yis, sir, that ye have. I've sailed abroad your ships many a time. My name's Barney O'Flannagan, at yer sarvice."

"Ah! I recollect; and a good man you are, I've been told, Barney. But I have lost sight of you for some years. Been on a long voyage, I suppose?"

"Well not 'xactly; but I've been on a long cruise, an' no mistake, in the woods o' Brazil. I was wrecked on the coast there, in the *Firefly*."

"Ah! to be sure. I remember. And your young messmate here, was he with you?"

"Yes, sir, I was," said Martin answering for himself; "and I had once the pleasure of your acquaintance. Perhaps if you look steadily in my face you may—"

"Ah then! don't try to bamboozle him. He might as well look at a bit o' mahogany as at your faygur-head. Tell him at wance, Martin, dear."

"Martin?" exclaimed the puzzled old gentleman, seizing the young sailor by the shoulders and gazing intently into his face. "Martin! Martin! Surely not—yes! eh? Martin Rattler?"

"Ay, that am I, dear Mr. Jollyboy, safe and sound, and—"

Martin speech was cut short in consequence of him being violently throttled by Mr. Jollyboy, who flung his arms round his neck and staggered recklessly about the office with him! this was the great point which Barney had expected—it was the climax to which he had been looking forward all the morning; and it did not come short of his anticipations, for Mr. Jollyboy danced round Martin and embraced him for at least ten minutes, asking him at the same time a shower of questions, which he gave him no time to answer. In the excess of his delight, Barney smote his thigh with his broad hand so forcibly that it burst upon the startled clerk like a pistol-shot, and cause him to spring off his stool!

"Don't be afear'd, young un," said Barney, winking and poking the small clerk jocosely in the ribs with his thumb. "Isn't it beautiful to see them? Arrah, now! isn't it purty?"

"Keep your thumb to yourself, you sea-monster," said the small clerk angrily, and laying his hand on the ruler. But Barney minded him not, and continued to smite his thigh and rub his hands, while he performed some sort of gigantic war-dance round Mr. Jollyboy and Martin.

In a few minutes the old gentleman subsided sufficiently to understand questions.

"But my aunt," said Martin anxiously; "you have said nothing about Aunt Dorohy. How is she? where is she? is she well?"

To these questions Mr. Jollyboy returned no answered, by sitting suddenly down on a chair, he covered his face with his hands.

"She is not ill?" inquired Martin in a husky voice, while his heart beat violently. "Speak Mr. Jollyboy, is she—is she—"

"No, she's not ill," returned the old gentleman; "but she's—"

"She is dead!" said Martin, in a tone so deep and sorrowful that the old gentleman started up,

"No, no, not dead, my dear boy ; I did not mean that. Forgive my stupidity, Martin. Aunty Dorothy is gone—left the village a year ago ; and I have never seen or heard of her since."

Terrible though this news was, Martin felt a slight degree of relief to know that she was not dead—at least there was reason to hope that she might be still alive.

"But when did she go ? and why ? and where ?

"She went about twelve months ago," replied Mr. Jollyboy. "You see, Martin, after she lost you she seemed to lose all hope and all spirit ; and at last she gave up making soles for me, and did little but moan in her seat in the window and look out towards the sea. So I got a pleasant young girl to take care of her ; and she did not want for any of the comforts of life. One day the little girl came to me here, having run all the way from the village, to say that Mrs. Grumbit had packed up a bundle of clothes and gone off to Liverpool by the coach. She took the opportunity of the girl's absence on some errand to escape, and we should never have known it had not some boys of the village seen her get into the coach and tell the guard that she was going to make inquiries after Martin. I instantly set out for Liverpool ; but long before I arrived the coach had discharged its passengers, and the coachman, not suspecting that anything was wrong, had taken no notice of her after arriving. From that day to this I have not ceased to advertise and make all possible inquiries, but without success."

Martin heard the narrative in silence, and when it was finished he sat a few minutes gazing vacantly before him, like one in a dream. Then starting up suddenly, he wrung Mr. Jollyboy's hand. "Good-bye, my dear friend, good-bye. I shall go to Liverpool. We shall meet again."

"Stay, Martin, stay—"

But Martin had rushed from the room, followed by his faithful friend, and in less than half-an-hour they were in the village of Ashford. The coach was to pass in twenty minutes, so bidding Barney engage two outside seats, Martin hastened round by the road towards the cottage. There it stood, quaint, time-worn, and old-fashioned, as when he had last seen it—the little garden in which he had so often played—the bower in which, on fine weather, Aunt Dorothy used to sit, and the door-step on which the white kitten used to gambol. But the shutters were closed and the door was locked, and there was an air of desolation and a deep silence brooding over the place that sank more poignantly into Martin's heart than if he had come and found every vestige of the home of his childhood swept away. It was like the body without the soul. The flowers and stones and well-known forms were there ; but she who had given animation to the whole was gone. Sitting down on the doorstep, Martin buried his face in his hands and wept.

He was quickly aroused by the bugle of the approaching coach. Springing up, he dashed away the tears and hurried towards the high-road. In a few minutes Barney and he were seated on the top of the coach, and dashing, at the rate of ten miles an hour, along the road to Liverpool,

CHAPTER XXVII.

The old garret.

DAYS and weeks and months passed away, and Martin had searched every nook and corner of the great sea-port without discovering his old aunt, or obtaining the slightest information regarding her. At first he and Barney went about the search together, but after a time he sent his old companion forcibly away to visit his own relatives, who dwelt not far from Bilton, at the same time promising that if he had any good news to tell he would immediately write and let him know.

One morning, as Martin was sitting beside the little fire in his lodging, a tap came to the door, and the servant girl told him that a policeman wished to see him.

"Show him in," said Martin, who was not in the least surprised, for he had had much intercourse with these guardians of the public peace during the course of his unavailing search.

"I think, sir," said the man on entering, "that we've got scent of an old woman which is as like the one that you're arter as hanythink."

Martin rose in haste. "Have you, my man! Are you sure?"

"'Bout as sure as a man can be who never seed her. But it won't take you long to walk. You'd better come and see for yourself."

Without uttering another word, Martin put on his hat and followed the policeman. They passed through several streets and lanes, and at length came to one of the poorest districts of the city, not far distant from the shipping. Turning down a narrow alley, and crossing a low dirty-looking court, Martin's guide stopped before a door, which he pushed open, and mounted by a flight of rickety wooden stairs to a garret. He opened the door and entered.

"There she is," said the man in a tone of pity, as he pointed to a corner of the apartment; "an' I'm afeard she's goin' fast."

Martin stepped towards a low truckle-bed on which lay the emaciated form of a woman covered with a scanty and ragged quilt. The corner of it was drawn across her face, and so gentle was her breathing that it seemed as if she were already dead. Martin removed the covering, and one glance at that gentle, careworn countenance sufficed to convince him that his old aunt lay before him. His first impulse was to seize her in his strong arms, but another look at the frail and attenuated form caused him to shrink back in fear.

"Leave me," he said, rising hastily, and slipping half a sovereign into the policeman's hand; "this is she. I wish to be alone with her."

The man touched his hat and retired, closing the door behind him; while, Martin, sitting down on the bed, took one of his aunt's thin hands in his. The action was tenderly performed, but it awoke her. For the first time it flashed across Martin's mind that the sudden joy of seeing him might be too much for one so feeble as Aunt Dorothy seemed to be. He turned his back hastily to the light, and with a violent effort suppressed his feelings while he asked how she did.

"Well, very well," said Aunt Dorothy, in a faint voice. "Are you the missionary that was here long ago? Oh! I've been longing for you. Why did you not come to read to me oftener about Jesus? But I have had Him here although you did not come. He has been

saying, 'Come unto me, ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Yes, I have found rest in Him." She ceased and seemed to fall asleep again; but in a few seconds she opened her eyes and said, "Martin, too, has been to see me; but he does not come so often now. The darling boy used always to come to me in my dreams. But he never brings me food. Why does no one ever bring me food? I am hungry."

"Should you like food now, if I brought it to you?" said Martin in a low voice.

"Yes, yes, bring me food; I am dying."

Martin released her hand and glided gently out of the room. In a few minutes he returned with a can of warm soup and a roll, of which Aunt Dorothy partook with avidity that showed she had been in urgent need. Immediately after she went to sleep, and Martin sat upon the bed holding her hand in both of his till she awoke, which she did in an hour after, and again ate a little food. While she was thus engaged the door opened and a young man entered, who stated that he was a doctor, and had been sent there by a policeman.

"There is no hope," he said in a whisper, after feeling her pulse; "the system is quite exhausted."

"Doctor," whispered Martin, seizing the young man by the arm, "can nothing save her? I have money, and can command *anything* that may do her good."

The doctor shook his head. "You may give her a little wine. It will strengthen her for a time, but I fear there is no hope. I will send in a bottle if you wish it."

Martin gave him the requisite sum, and in a few minutes the wine was brought up by a boy.

The effect of the wine was wonderful. Aunt Dorothy's eyes sparkled as they used to do in days of old, and she spoke with unwonted energy.

"You are kind to me, young man," she said, looking earnestly into Martin's face, which, however, he kept carefully in shadow. "May our Lord reward you!"

"Would you like me to talk to you of your nephew?" said Martin. "I have seen him abroad."

"Seen my boy! Is he not dead?"

"No; he is alive, and in this country, too."

Aunt Dorothy turned pale, but did not reply for a few minutes, during which she grasped his hand convulsively.

"Turn your face to the light," she said faintly.

Martin obeyed, and bending over her whispered, "He is here; I am Martin, my dear, dear aunt—"

No expression of surprise escaped from Aunt Dorothy as she folded her arms round his neck and pressed his head upon her bosom. His hot tears fell upon her neck while she held him, but she spoke not. It was evident that as the strength infused by the wine abated her faculties became confused. At length she whispered,—

"It is good of you to come to see me, darling boy. You have often come to me in my dreams. But do not leave me so soon; stay a very little longer."

"This is no dream, dearest aunt," whispered Martin, while his tears flowed faster; "I am really here."

"Ay, so you always say, my darling child; but you always go away

and leave me. This is a dream, no doubt, like all the rest ; but oh, it seems very, very real ! You never *wept* before, although you often smiled. Surely this is the best and brightest dream I ever had ! ”

Continuing to murmur his name while she clasped him tightly to her bosom, Aunt Dorothy gently fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Conclusion.

AUNT DOROTHY GRUMBIT did *not* die. Her gentle spirit had nearly fled ; but Martin's return and Martin's tender nursing brought her round, and she gradually regained all her former strength and vigour.

Yes, to the unutterable joy of Martin, to the inexpressible delight of Mr. Arthur Jollyboy and Barney, and to the surprise and complete discomfiture of the young doctor, who shook his head and said, “ There is no hope,” Aunt Dorothy Grumbit recovered, and was brought back in health and in triumph to her old cottage at Ashford !

Moreover, she was arrayed again in the old bed-curtain chintz with the flowers as big as saucers, and the old high-crowned cap. A white kitten was got, too, so like the one that used to be Martin's play-mate that no one could discover a hair of difference. So remarkable was this, that Martin made inquiry, and found that it was actually the grand-daughter of the old kitten, which was still alive and well ; so he brought it back too, and formerly installed it in the cottage along with its grandchild.

There was a great house-warming on the night of the day in which Aunt Dorothy Grumbit was brought back. Mr. Arthur Jollyboy was there—of course ; and the vicar was there ; and the pursy doctor who used to call Martin “ a scamp ; ” and the schoolmaster ; and last, though not least, Barney O'Flannagan was there. And they all had tea, during which dear Aunt Dorothy smiled sweetly on everybody and said nothing—and, indeed, did nothing, except that once or twice she put additional sugar and cream into Martin's cup when he was not looking, and stroked one of his hands continually. After tea Martin related his adventures in Brazil, and Barney helped him ; and these two talked more that night than any one could have believed it possible for human beings to do, without the aid of steam lungs ! And the doctor listened, and the vicar and schoolmaster questioned, and old Mr. Jollyboy roared and laughed till he became purple in the face—particularly at the sallies of Barney. As for old Aunt Dorothy Grumbit, she listened when Martin spoke. When Martin was silent she became stone deaf !

In the course of time Mr. Jollyboy made Martin his head clerk ; and then, becoming impatient, he made him his partner off-hand. Then he made Barney O'Flannagan an overseer in the warehouses ; and when the duties of the day were over, the versatile Irishman became his confidential servant, and went to sup and sleep at the Old Hulk ; which, he used to remark, was quite a natural and proper and decidedly comfortable place to come to an anchor in.

Martin became the stay and comfort of his aunt in her old age, and the joy which he was the means of giving to her heart was like a deep and placid river which never ceases to flow. Ah ! there is a rich blessing in store for those who tenderly nurse and comfort the

aged, when called upon to do so ; and assuredly there is a sharp thorn prepared for those who neglect this sacred duty. Martin read the Bible to her night and morning ; and she did nothing but watch for him at the window while he was out. As Martin afterwards became an active member of the benevolent societies with which his partner was connected, he learned from sweet experience that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," and that "it is *better* to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting."

Dear young reader, do not imagine that we plead in favour of moroseness or gloom. Laugh if you will, and feast if you will, and remember, too, that "a merry heart is a continual feast ;" but we pray you not to forget that God himself has said that a visit to the house of mourning is *better* than a visit to the house of feasting. And stranger to say, it is productive of greater joy ; for to do good is better than to get good, as surely as sympathy is better than selfishness.

Martin visited the poor and read the Bible to them ; and in watering others he was himself watered, for he found the "Pearl of Great Price," even Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Business prospered in the hands of Martin Rattler, too, and he became a man of substance. Naturally, too, he became a man of great importance in the town of Bilton. The quantity of work that Martin and Mr. Jollyboy and Barney used to get through was marvellous, and the number of engagements they had during the course of a day was quite bewildering.

In the existence of all men, who are not born to unmitigated misery, there are times and seasons of peculiar enjoyment. The happiest hour of all the twenty-four to Martin Rattler was the hour of seven in the evening ; for then it was that he found himself seated before the blazing fire in the parlour of the Old Hulk, to which Aunt Dorothy Grumbit had consented to be removed, and in which she was now a fixture. Then it was that old Mr. Jollyboy beamed with benevolence, until the old lady sometimes thought the fire was going to melt him ; then it was that the tea-kettle sang on the hob like a canary ; and then it was that Barney bustled about the room preparing the evening meal, and talking all the time with the most perfect freedom to any one who choose to listen to him. Yes, seven p.m. was Martin's great hour, and Aunt Dorothy's great hour, and old Mr. Jollyboy's great hour, and Barney's too ; for each knew that the labours of the day were done, and that the front door was locked for the night, and that a great talk was brewing.

They had a tremendous talk every night, sometimes on one subject, sometimes on another ; but the subject of all others that they talked oftest about was their travels. And many a time and oft, when the winter storms howled round the Old Hulk, Barney was invited to draw in his chair, and Martin and he plunged vigorously into the great old forests of South America, and spoke so feelingly about them that Aunt Dorothy and Mr. Jollyboy almost fancied themselves transported into the midst of tropical scenes, and felt as if they were surrounded by parrots, and monkeys, and jaguars, and alligators, and anacondas, and all the wonderful birds, beasts, reptiles, and fishes that inhabit the woods and waters of Brazil.



